12-PAGE SPECIAL: AMIGA "HELP LINES"—p.12

AMIGA WORLD

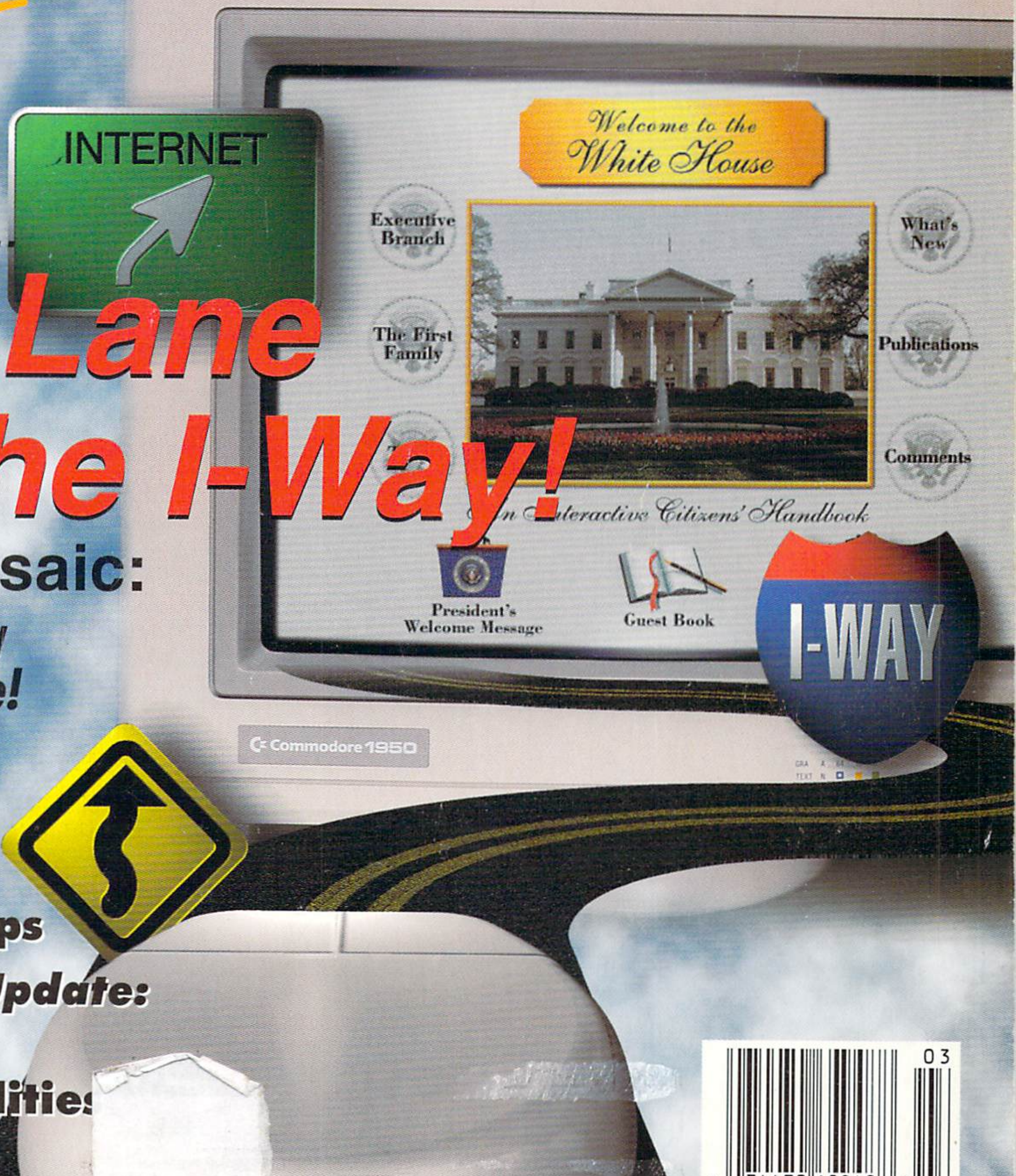
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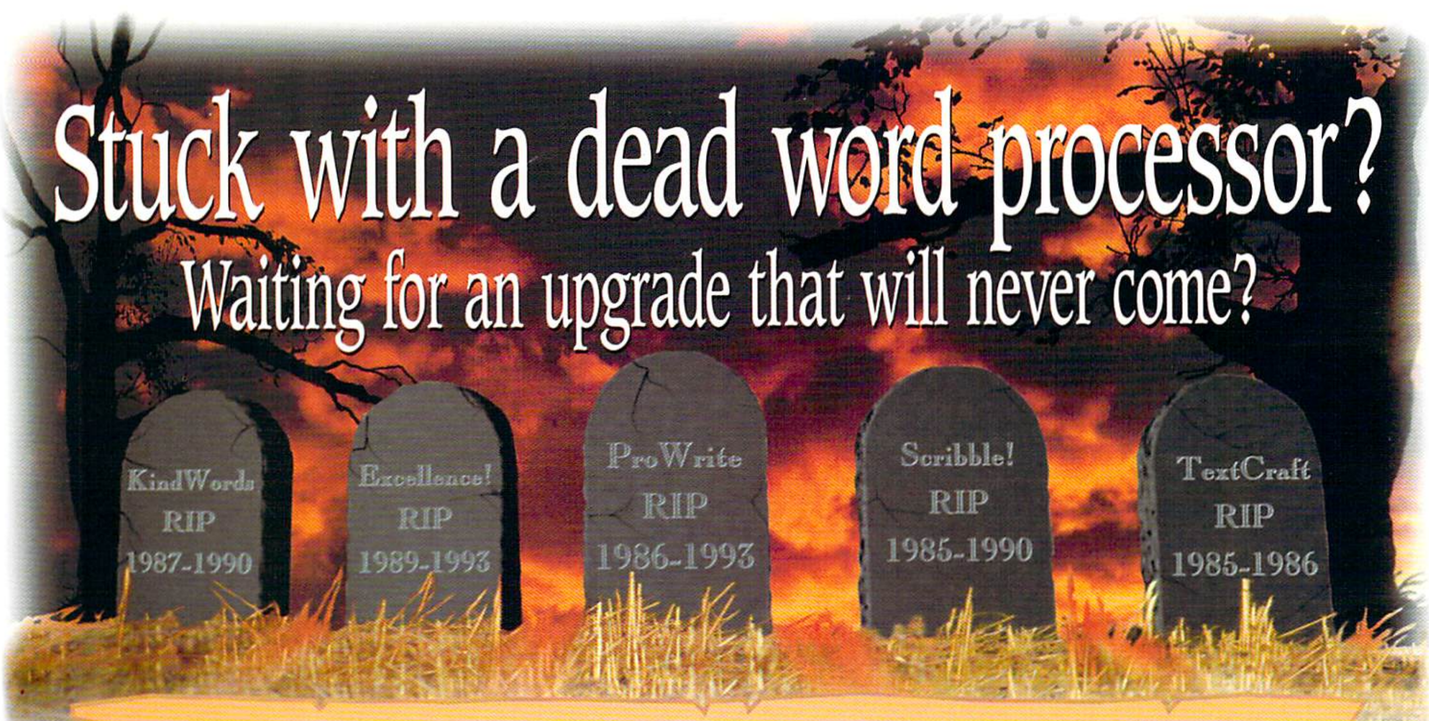
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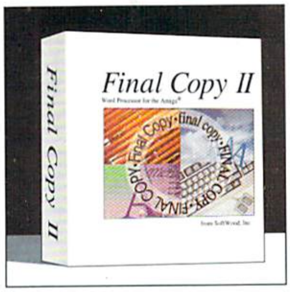
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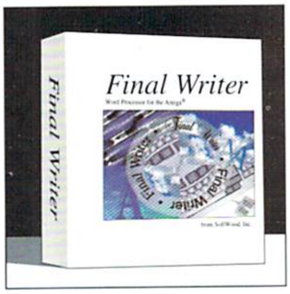
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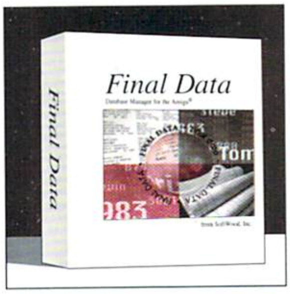
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Release 2. "Readers' Choice Award 1993", Amazing Computing; "Award '93 - Best Software Product", Amiga Plus (Germany), "Product of the Year 1993", Amiga Magazine (Germany). What more can we say? This is the most popular and most used word processor on the Amiga today. It features a 110,000 word speller, 1.4 million word thesaurus; auto-hyphenation; search and replace; tab stops; adjustable margins; word and sentence counts; paragraph sorting; on-screen math; ARexx port; style sheets; drawing tools; imported IFF graphics; master pages; Compugraphic, Type-1, and NimbusQ outline font support; 30 outline fonts; and the best printing possible on any Workbench supported printer. System requirements: 1 megabyte of RAM, 2 floppy drives, and Workbench 1.3 or higher.



New Release 3. "...Final Writer is arguably the best word processor yet released for the Amiga.", Amiga World, March 1994. "...Final Writer is the top Amiga word processor to rival even the Mac and PC heavyweights.", CU Amiga (England), January 1994. Final Writer has all of Final Copy II's features (see above) plus many more. It includes: undo; easy bold, italic, and underlining; table of contents, table of illustrations, endnotes, bibliography, and index generation; sections; multiple master pages; EPS graphic support; 120 outline fonts; rotating graphics; movable text blocks; and a user button strip. Release 3 now includes easy page numbering, drag and drop, type and spell, polygon drawing tool, special shape drawing tools, and dictionary hyphenation. Requirements: 2.5 megabytes of RAM, hard drive, and Workbench 2.04 or higher.



New program. Final Data is the new database manager for the Amiga. It is designed for people who need a convenient tool to keep track of lists of information. It combines very fast sorting and searching with quick printing of reports and labels. Final Data is ideal for name and address lists, video libraries, customer lists, references, etc. Anyone can learn to set up a database, enter data, and print reports and labels in a matter of minutes – not days! Reports come complete with page headings that include title and page numbers. Reports may be printed with totals and row counts. Labels can be defined in a variety of formats. Use with Final Copy II or Final Writer for the best mail-merge possible. Accepts PenPal, InfoFile, MiAmiga File, and File IIsg databases. Requirements: 1 floppy drive, 512K RAM, and WB 1.3 or higher.

1-800-247-8314 SoftWood, Inc.

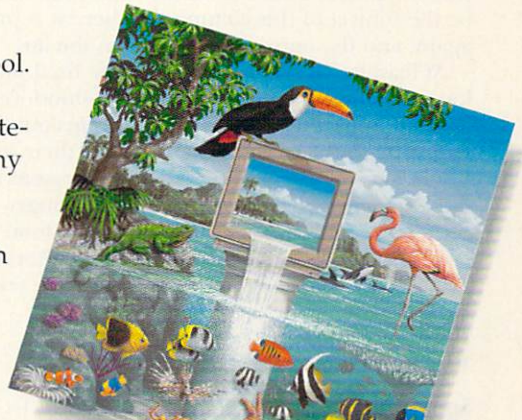
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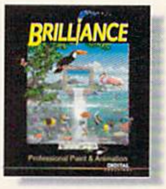
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FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Looking for resolutions . . .

I sincerely hope that the first meaning of the above line is completely out of date, irrelevant, moot, or whatever by the time you read this. What I mean, of course, is that before this issue hits the newsstand, there will have been an official announcement stating who the new owners of the Amiga are. That's certainly what I had hoped would be the subject of this column, but here it is press time again, and the outcome is still up in the air.

At least we're at what has to be the final stage in this long, painful process of burying Commodore. And, at least we know that there are two groups out there who have put up their deposits and put in their sealed bids. It would have been a great New Year's present if the liquidators had made their decision by January 1 so we could have gotten 1995 off on the right foot. (I swear, if I ever hear the word "liquidators" again after all this is over, someone's going to be missing a few teeth!)

Please Listen Up, New Owners, Whomever You May Be

Speaking of New Year's, even though the 1st has come and gone, how about some New Year's resolutions for the new owners of the Amiga—whomever they happen to be. And that's where you come in, Dear Reader.

I'd like to personally present Mr. Amor or Mr. Pleasance with a list of things that *AmigaWorld* readers think the new owners should do regarding the Amiga once they take over. Whether it's new development, ramping up production of existing products, marketing advice, service concerns, or whatever—let's let them know.

Send in your recommendations to "First Impressions" (c/o *AmigaWorld*, 80 Elm St., Peterborough, NH 03458). If you've got more than one, fine, but try to keep them reasonably brief so we can assemble a manageable package. I'll also publish a representative sample of them, say, two issues from now so everyone can get an idea of how other Amiga users are thinking.

From what I've learned, both groups have expressed a sincere desire to listen to what the users have to say (something the former ownership in its contemptible arrogance never seemed even remotely interested in). So, let's give them plenty of food for thought to help them make a good fresh start!

Daniel Sullivan

Daniel Sullivan
Editor in Chief

AmigaWorld

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COLUMNS



If Commodore's departure from the Amiga market has left **you** *hanging, we've organized a four-tier rescue effort to get you back safely on the ground.* *See "Help Lines," p. 12.*

DEPARTMENTS

REVIEWS

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By Peter Olafson

COVER CREATED BY JACK HARRIS / VISUAL LOGIC

OVERSCAN

News, New Products and More

Video Toaster Expo '94

For a few days in December, North Hollywood became "the center of the Toaster and LightWave 3D universe" when Avid Media Group sponsored its first Video Toaster Expo at the Universal City Hilton & Towers Hotel.

More than 3000 show attendees were treated to a full schedule of intense Toaster seminars and classes, more than a dozen special product demonstrations, and sales from about fifty vendor booths.

Keynote speaker was Tim Jenison, president of NewTek. Seminar instructors included LightWave 3D programmers Allen Hastings and Stu Ferguson; frequent *Video Toaster User* contibutors Lee Stranahan, Arnie Cachelin, James Hebert, Jason Linhart, and Brad Peebler; and such industry wizards as Dale Myers, Grant Boucher, John Gross, Tony Stutterheim, and Glen Miller, to name just a few.

Commenting on the show's success, Jim Plant, Avid Media Group CEO, said, "The Expo exceeded all of our expectations; exhibit space totally sold out and most manufacturers . . . sold out [product] too."

NewTek showed off the **Video Flyer** and **LightWave 4.0** (now $995), which now runs on SGI machines and PCs, as well as Amigas.

Nova Design demoed **ImageFX 2.0**, a major upgrade of its popular 24-bit image-processing and painting program. Some of its new features include more than a dozen new loaders and savers, about two dozen more special effects, a thumbnail preview option, and support for the Epson 1200c scanner. Self-proclaimed "Toaster Head," actor Dick Van Dyke, was even seen with a copy tucked under his arm.

Innovision Technology's 36-bit **Alpha Paint** requires a Toaster and is intended as an alternative to ToasterPaint. The company's booth was always packed as onlookers twisted their necks to get a look at the elaborate new package.

Questar Productions ran an impressing videotape presentation of animations created with its **World Construction Set** (see review, Dec. '94) to appreciative crowds.

Silent Paw Productions showed an early lucite-cased prototype of its laptop Amiga kit, the **Personal Amiga Workstation**, which lets you take your Toaster on location.

Area 52 was busy selling interVisual Software's **Plantation**, a new distributed-rendering package for LightWave 3D, along with its line of hard drives and other goodies.

Dealers in attendance included ***B&H Photo-Video*** and ***Anti-Gravity Workshop***, whose booth was decorated with inflatable "Rendersaurus" dinos.

Business was brisk at the ***Fred Fish Amiga Library Services*** booth, where its new **Light-ROM CD,** a collection of LighWave objects, was a hot-seller.

Aspen Systems displayed its 275 MHz **DEC Alpha Workstation**, while ***Blevins Enterprises*** gave demos of the **VertiSketch 3D** digitizer.

Other participants included: ***Dimension Technologies*** **(Composite Studio)**, ***Dynamic Realities*** **(Impact!)**, ***Focus GbR*** **(Graphic Recall)**, ***Interworks*** **(T-Net and Enlan-DFS)**, ***MegageM*** **(Fractal Pro)**, ***NoahJi's*** **(VLab Motion System)**, ***Prime Image***, ***Radiosity*** **(Wavemaker 2)**, ***RGB Computers & Video*** **(AmiLink)**, ***SunRize Industries*** **(Studio 16)**, and ***Viewpoint Datalabs***.

If you missed the show, a two-hour video of Expo highlights is available (call Avid Media Group at 800/322-2843)—and there's always next year!

—Harv Laser

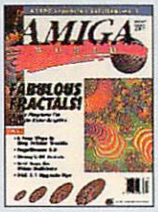
Commodore Watch

With sealed bids and cash deposits in from two groups, the liquidators in the Commodore case were expected to make a final decision as this issue was going to press. Alex Amor of Creative Equipment International confirmed that CEI had made a formal offer for the rights to the Amiga on December 15. David Pleasance of the former Commodore UK management team followed up on December 22 with his group's official bid. No other groups were expected to participate in the final bidding process.

While anticipation ran high that the court-appointed liquidators would make an announcement in early January, no decision had been reached as of press time. Both groups involved in the bidding were very confident of their chances, and each felt that the onus was now squarely on the liquidators to render a final—and speedy—decision in the case.

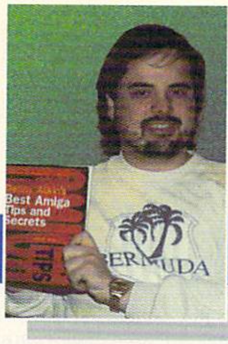
—DS

AW Shucks!



While we did credit Daniel Wolf, the creator of the fractal images used on the Feb. '95 cover and in the cover feature (p. 12), we neglected to mention that they were created using MegageM's Fractal Pro software or taken from MegageM's Fractal Pro Image Library, Vol. 1, CD-ROM. Thanks again, Dan, for your assistance.

To locate the vendors of products mentioned, see the "Manufacturers'/Distributors' Addresses" list on p. 62.



Denny on DOS

HINTS & TIPS FOR MASTERING THE OPERATING SYSTEM

By Denny Atkin

#10—Valuable Commodities

In the Amiga's early days, the computer's multitasking made it a much better platform for running utilities and operating-system enhancements than the DOS-based PCs of the day. Pop-up utilities for programming function keys, blanking the mouse, or dialing the phone were really just additional programs rather than interrupt-driven TSRs, so everything coexisted nicely—except when it came to the keyboard, that is.

Because the operating system didn't provide a method for a utility to check a keypress while you were running a word processor, programmers had to make the programs check keypresses before they reached the operating system. Many utilities used identical keypresses to activate functions, forcing you to choose to run one or the other. Others would mess up the input food chain, eating keypresses before they could reach other utilities. Sometimes things were smooth, but some utility combinations were prescriptions for disaster.

Commodities to the Rescue

AmigaDOS 2.04 introduced a new system, called Commodities, to prevent such conflicts. In earlier versions of the OS, every utility that needed to watch the keyboard had to wedge in front of the input.device. Under 2.04 and later, the Commodities system does all the keyboard watching, sending trigger messages to the appropriate commodity (utility) when particular keys are pressed. Now you have only one extra program—the main Commodities driver—watching the keyboard.

Another advantage to the Commodities scheme is that it allows you to define your own keypresses for pop-up utilities. If a utility is set to blank the screen when you press Shift-F1, but your word processor uses that keypress to start a spell-check, you can easily change the commodity's trigger-keypress.

The best way to make commodities active in your system is to drag them into the WBStartup drawer on your boot disk. (If you don't want a commodity to load every time you start the system, you can also start it manually from the Workbench.)

Each commodity's icon has a set of ToolTypes that control how it interacts with the rest of the system. If you want to load a commodity, but you don't want its window to open, change the CX_POPUP=YES ToolType to NO. To change the keypress used to open a commodity's window, alter the CX_POPKEY ToolType; for example, you might set a screen saver to CX_POPKEY=LShift LAlt S.

Finally, the CX_PRIORITY ToolType determines who gets first shot at a keypress. Suppose one commodity performs an operation when you press F1, but you want to make sure the FKey commodity (which lets you redefine function keys) gets the F1 keypress instead. In such a case, set FKey's ToolType to CX_PRIORITY=5. (The default is 0.)

> **Quick Tip**
>
> To supplement the commodities included on your Workbench disk, you'll find dozens of public-domain and shareware commodities on the online networks. These range from do-all commodities such as YAK to handy, single-purpose programs such as Steve Tibbett's CacheX disk cache.

Commodity Exchange

A commodity called Exchange is used to control the other commodities in your system. The default keypress to bring up Exchange (if it's running) is Ctrl-Alt-Help. A list of all the commodities in your system appears in a list box in the Exchange window. Select any commodity, and you can show or hide its control interface (a few commodities, such as NoCapsLock, don't have an interface), make the commodity temporarily inactive, or remove it entirely. (You can remove some commodities that don't have interfaces, such as AutoPoint, by simply double-clicking their icons a second time.)

A number of useful commodities are included with the system. AutoPoint automatically activates the window under the mouse pointer (pretty annoying if you ask me). Blanker is a simple screen blanker; in some versions of AmigaDOS it simply makes the screen go blank (which is all a screen blanker *needs* to do), but more recent revisions toss in the glitz and animate a squiggly line as well. Change the SECONDS=60 ToolType if you want the screen blanker to kick in sooner or later than the default. If you decide you want a true blanker instead of the animated version, add a ToolType that says ANIMATION=NO.

ClickToFront brings a window to the front when you hold down the left Alt key (you can change this using ToolTypes) and double-click on the window. The CrossDOS commodity (in 2.1 and later) lets you set the text-translation options when reading and writing MS-DOS disks.

NoCapsLock disables the Caps Lock key, which is useful if you have a habit of accidentally hitting it. One of my favorites is MouseBlanker, which makes the mouse pointer disappear when you start typing.

Perhaps the most powerful commodity included with the operating system is FKey. You can use it to assign text strings to function keys or key sequences. But the utility does much more: It enables you to assign key sequences to cycle through windows or screens, enlarge or shrink windows, toggle a window's size, and even run programs or ARexx scripts. With careful programming of FKey, you can make most of your Amiga's functions available with a simple keypress. ■

Denny Atkin is author of the book ***Denny Atkin's Best Amiga Tips and Secrets****. Send suggestions to him via e-mail at DennyAmiga@aol.com, or write to him c/o* ***AmigaWorld****.*

World of Amiga

LONDON—While expectations were high at the much anticipated World of Amiga show, attendees who waited for word on the rumored buy-out of the remains of Commodore by the UK group, lead by David Pleasance, were disappointed—the multi-tiered bidding process continues. The former management team was on hand, however, to discuss its marketing plans with dealers and distributors should it acquire the remains. Of particular concern to the UK group was the limited supply of certain Amiga internal components, which could result in significant production delays.

From the Floor

The good news is there's no severe shortage of fresh products from Amiga developers, if show participation is any indication. ***CyberVision*** premiered two impressive add-ons for the A4000: **CyberVision 64** and **CyberStorm**. CyberVision 64 is a 64-bit graphics card that offers solid performance at *any* resolution. Additionally, upgrade software will soon be available for owners of non-AGA Amigas to take advantage of the card. CyberStorm, a 50Mhz '060 accelerator board, claims to increase rendering speed threefold! (An 80Mhz version is in the works.)

Almathera Systems unfolded **Photogenics** (about $120), a 24-bit graphics manipulation package, and **Video Creator**, a video-effects CD-ROM with MPEG support. Almathera also presented a collection of fonts, 3-D objects, and textures on CD-ROM.

Ramiga International wowed the crowds with **Silicon Studio Workstation**, an Amiga 4000-based full-featured digital audio system. It offers 24-track 44.1 KHz mixing with MIDI support.

Optonica showcased its new directory and file manager, **Info-Nexus**, now with support for Envoy networks; it also displayed a database program, **Data-Nexus**.

Show highlights from games developers included: ***Virgin Interactive's*** **Lion King** and **Cannon Fodder 2**; ***Psygnosis'*** **X-IT**, a scrolling puzzle game, and **Fink**, a platform game for CD-32; and for die-hard soccer fans only, ***Gremlin Interactive's*** **Premier Manager 3** (reviewed in this month's Game Preserve) and ***Anco's*** **Kick Off 3** (also reviewed).

Although show attendance was the lowest it's been in years, WOA was a success, nonetheless, if only as proof of the continued interest in the Amiga by developers.

—*Stuart Menges*



Update Scan

Until version 3.1 is released (no date set at press time), ***Soft-Logik*** is offering four patch files for PageStream 3.0. You can download these files for free via Soft-Logik's BBS (314/256-8971); the files have additionally been uploaded to CompuServe and GEnie. The latest update is also available on disk for $10 (shipping and handling fee), or $30 if you participate in an update plan that puts you on Soft-Logik's mailing list to receive all the files automatically as they become available.

Amiga Envoy 2.0 ($59.95; $25, upgrade; ***Intanible Assests Manufacturing***) now supports AmigaDOS 2.04 packet types and removable media, and offers AmigaGuide documentation, among other improvements. It requires Workbench 2.04 or later, 512K of RAM, and SANA-II compatible networking hardware (1MB of RAM and a hard drive are recommended).

Amiga/Toaster Reference Manual ($50, ***Area52***) is a hypertext help guide that installs onto your hard drive. The new version features answers to the most frequently asked questions about Workbench, AmigaDOS 3.1, LightWave, and various applications software. Other highlights include an Amiga dictionary, refraction indexes, and hardware specs for all Amigas. The manual requires Workbench 2.04 or later, a 3MB hard drive, and 1MB of RAM. Upgrades are offered on a weekly basis via Area52's 24-hour BBS.

TVPaint 3.0 (***Activa International***), a 24-bit paint program, is now available for Windows as well as Amiga; it already supports all major file formats including TIFF, SGI, GIF, and JPEG. TVPaint's distinctive multi-layering effect allows you to work on three images simultaneously, as well as open a spare screen to "test drive" one of the program's special effects or image-processing functions. It features an intuitive icon and menu-driven interface, as well as keyboard shortcuts and powerful undo and redo features. To take advantage of TVPaint's wide array of drawing tools, a pressure-sensitive drawing tablet or pen is strongly recommended.

MediaEditor 4.0 (upgrade, $90, ***Interactive MicroSystems***) is an edit decision list manager for video. You "log in" scenes from raw footage, which you can then preview and record under computer control. MediaEditor also plays and records graphics and animations from edit list script commands. It can control more than fifteen devices, including three video player decks, a switcher, a special-effects generator, DAT and audio cassette decks, compact disc players, and a recorder. It performs A/B roll editing with switcher control and time-code tape positioning.

Once you've edited your raw video with MediaEditor, you can use Interactive MicroSystems' **MediaPhile 3.0S Video Deck Controller** for "cuts" editing or A/B roll editing. MediaPhile controls player decks and camcorders equipped with Sony CTL-L or LANCS remote ports (a Panasonic CTL-M port adapter is in the works). The MP 3.0S kit is comprised of the LANCS controller, a recorder S-port cable, player LANCS port interface cable, player time-code audio cable, and the MediaPhile Infrared Controller.

Aminet Alternative

Ashamed to say that you don't own a modem? Not to worry—with the **BCI-NET** series of CDs from ***Better Concepts***, you can access some of the more popular programs on Aminet, the Internet's designated Amiga area. What's more, you can impress your Internet-savvy friends as you search or launch files via the CD's smooth interface. The series will be released on a quarterly basis (December '94 is currently available).

Can You See It?

With **Stereo CAD** ($54, ***JCA Europe***), you'll get the picture. The program lets you create 3-D stereogram images (just like the ones seen in poster shops), which can be saved as IFF files and imported to another program to print. Creating "hollusions" is a snap with Stereo CAD's icon-driven interface and tutorial—just remember not to blink.

Coming Attractions!

MacroSystems, manufacturers of 24-bit display products such as V-Lab Motion and the Retina boards, recently took *AmigaWorld* on a tour of its facitilites in Witten, Germany. Watch this page next month for a complete report of MacroSystem's new 68060-based Draco machine and what it may mean to the future of the Amiga.

Overscan is compiled by Ann Record. Send your news, new products, and network information to Overscan, *AmigaWorld* Editorial, 80 Elm St., Peterborough, NH 03458; or e-mail to record@dv.com. ■



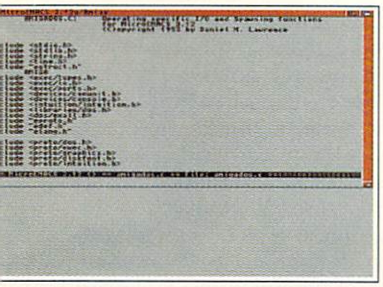
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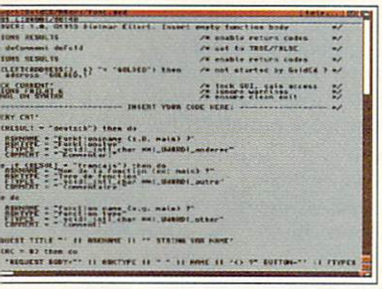
ON-LINE SOURCES FOR FREELY DISTRIBUTABLE SOFTWARE

By Tim Walsh

Once again, there's a lot of online talk about the Commodore liquidation, but not much action. The most recent development is confirmation of the rumor that in mid-December CEI placed a bid for CBM's assets. Shortly thereafter, the management team at Commodore UK announced that its bid had been accepted for consideration.

As a holiday morale booster for Amiga users, CEI's Alex Amor hosted an online conference on GEnie on December 22nd, answering a variety of questions. The online chatter continues, but thanks to CEI's efforts, the rumors aren't nearly as wild as a few months ago, and the quality of the discussions about the liquidation has improved immensely. Perhaps next month we'll be able to announce that a new owner is in place, and the liquidation will be nothing more than an unpleasant memory.





Something old and something "gold" from this month's sampling of text editors: David Gay's Emacs (top) and Dietmar Eiler's new GoldEd (bottom).

Editing the Text

Everyone who uses an Amiga eventually needs a text editor. In its simplest form, a text editor lets you compose lines of programming code and write scripts for the command line. As the name implies, you can also use text editors to write letters home to Mom, but due to their lack of conveniences, they generally don't make particularly useful word processors. Most include a number of options for properly formatting and saving code with no extraneous characters. As with most utilities, you can find a collection of freely distributable text editors online.

If you want to test-drive the latest version of TurboText 2.0 (see "Reviews" in this issue), check out the **TurboText 2.0 demo** floating around various nets. Featuring many performance enhancements, the demo reveals what's new. A short list of these includes on-line documentation, ASL file and screen-mode requesters, and a new ARexx macro cache. Also, you can now open each TurboText window on separate public screens, and lines are no longer limited to 32,768 characters.

The demo also shows how the new TurboText automatically detects binary files when loading a new document and how it adjusts its Preferences options accordingly. A number of enhancements also take advantage of AmigaDOS 3.1.

Robert Brandner's shareware **PolyEd** is a fast and powerful AmigaDOS 2.x/3.x text editor that works in any screen mode. The amount of RAM in your system determines both the maximum number of projects and number of windows per project. There's online-help, support for macros, and multiple undo and redo options. The online version you'll find (currently only on CompuServe) is a sample that quits operating after ten minutes unless you have paid the shareware fee.

John Harper's **Jade v3.2** is another freely distributable text editor designed exclusively for programmers. Offering a Lisp-style extension language you can tailor to your own requirements, Jade supports both the Amiga and X-Windows under a graphical windowing system.

No discussion of freely distributable text editors would be complete without mention of David Gay's text editor, **Emacs** for the Amiga. This Swiss programmer has obviously spent years creating an enormous archive containing numerous examples. By the author's own admission, Emacs is a rather cryptic editor that uses sequences of keypresses and mouse clicks instead of conventional menus. Above and beyond its full ARexx interface, sophisticated features for programmers, and online support, its quick execution speeds make this text editor worth a close examination.

Golden Text

Saving the best for last leads us to **GoldEd**, a shareware text editor by Dietmar Eiler. An event-based text editor, GoldEd waits for a pressed key or other input, then calls a dispatcher to perform the appropriate action.

GoldEd doesn't use an internal macro language: Its internal functions are function calls. It fully relies on ARexx for conditional statements.

While it works on unaccelerated systems, for optimum performance the author recommends AmigaDOS 3.x, an accelerator for increased speed, and 2MB or more of RAM. It may work satisfactorily under older versions of the OS, but some of GoldEd's advanced features require 2.1, and many other features could well use 3.x because of the increased performance that operating system gives.

Network Voice Numbers

BIX
800/695-4882
617/354-4137

CompuServe
614/457-0802
800/848-8199

Delphi
800/695-4005

GEnie
800/638-9636

Portal
408/973-9111
800/433-6444 ■

*Write to "Prime-Time PD" c/o **AmigaWorld** Editorial, 80 Elm St., Peterborough, NH 03458; or contact Tim through the Internet at "twalsh@bix.com".*

REVIE

Powerhouse multimedia authoring software.

CanDo 3.0

INOVAtronics, $399

All Amigas.
2.x/3.x compatible.
Hard-drive installable.
Not copy protected.
Accelerator compatible.
Minimum system: 2MB RAM, 8MB hard-disk space.
Recommended system: Same as minimum.

CanDo is one of those products that has knocked my socks off with each new revision. Although the basic interface has remained fairly constant through the years, INOVAtronics' newest incarnation of its best-selling authoring system bears little resemblance to the bare-bones CanDo 1.0 that appeared in 1989.

One glance at the 3-ring, 600-page manual is enough to tell you that CanDo is now a fully mature programming language, able to stand its ground against any other programming environment. Don't let that scare you off, though: CanDo gives as little or as much as you ask of it, and it's as user-friendly as they come.

Assisting the new user is a separate manual that features half a dozen tutorials, taking you from a very simple deck through a gruelingly complex program. The tutorials are, however, too light on topics that intermediate users really need help with, such as subdecks, database management, and creating AmigaGuide help files.

What Can It Do?

In case you don't know what all the fuss is about, CanDo is a multimedia authoring system for creating programs with a minimum of traditional programming skill. In essence, you use CanDo's tools to add objects like buttons, graphics and requesters to the screen, and then to create Basic-like scripts that tell these gadgets what to do.

CanDo's metaphor is a deck of cards, in which each card is a screen that holds information and is interlinked to other cards. Each card can have buttons, text fields and document boxes, pictures, animbrushes, sounds, timers, and more. Moreover, CanDo decks have access to the serial port, joystick, and ARexx.

CanDo provides you with virtually complete control over the Amiga. You can call on a wide variety of sophisticated wipes to display full-screen pictures and brushes. You can use the mouse to choreograph animbrush motion around the screen and then trigger scripts to occur on specific frames. And CanDo's flexible database object allows you to manipulate data almost automatically for many sorts of tasks.

To locate the vendors of the products reviewed, see the "Manufacturers'/Distributors' Addresses" list on p. 62.

Button Factory

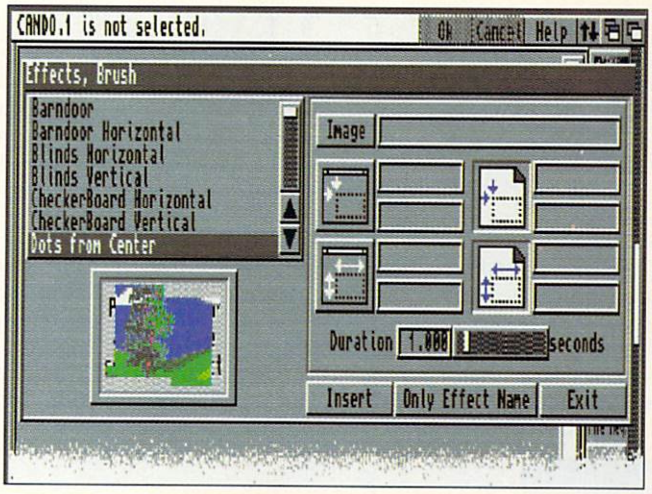
One of the most repetitive tasks in CanDo is the application of buttons and gadgets to the screen, but the program now provides so many tools to simplify this task that you're inclined to whistle while you work. In design mode, a single click on a button illuminates a draggable border that can be used to visually resize or move the window. Tools like SuperDuper and SuperMover automate the task of duplicating and moving groups of buttons with precision, and a new AlignObject tool precisely arranges multiple buttons automatically. Gone are the days when it took all afternoon to give a gadget-laden interface a neat, professional look.

Though the main panel is still basically a strip of tools at the bottom of the display, CanDo now sports an entirely new look. The main panel scrolls over 28 tools, and you may rearrange them to suit your taste.

Unfortunately, the script editor still cannot highlight text with the mouse; instead, you mark the start and end of text blocks the way mainframe text editors of old used to do. On the other hand, there are many improvements here. In the past, it was often a major hassle to locate the right syntax in CanDo's ever growing language. Now, thanks to the Lexicon Assistant, you can simply select the proper command template from a scrolling list, and then modify it to suit your purposes.

A similar Lexicon Assistant is provided for ARexx. You can pass ARexx messages between any external program and a CanDo deck, and with the new lexicon tool, you can quickly reference that other program's ARexx commands. Unfortunately, you'll have to create each glossary yourself, for CanDo

W S

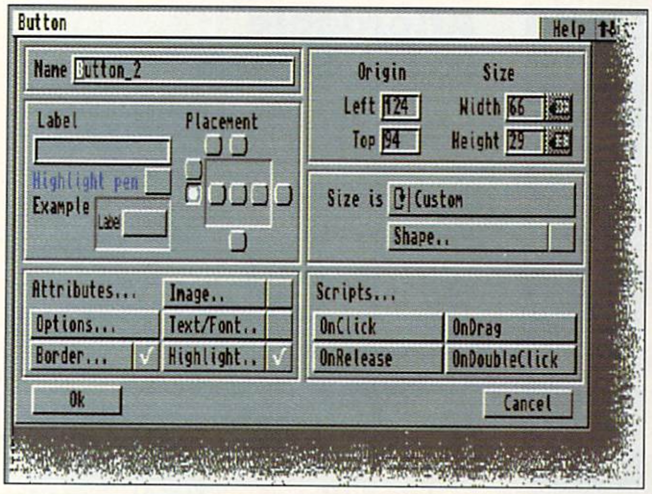


CanDo now offers a wide variety of wipes and other effects to display full-screen pictures and brushes.

comes with lexicon files for only two other INOVAtronics programs.

Thanks to the program's support for reusable code, you may not have to spend much time in the script editor. CanDo's Librarian tool lets you organize and save scripts for use in different decks.

Lastly, I'm overjoyed that you can now enter text directly on the screen as you would in any paint program or word processor. If the text later gets in the way of a rearranged button, just drag it with the mouse via the handle.



New tools in CanDo 3.0 make it much easier to create and manipulate screen buttons and other gadgets.

Summing Up

As CanDo has grown, it has become more expansive and less cozy. While I learned the limits and capabilities of CanDo 1.0 inside of a week, I still haven't tapped this new version's outer boundaries, nor will I ever need to. Thankfully, it remains a system that you can learn a bit at a time, mastering techniques as needed. And while subdecks—the ability to open multiple windows simultaneously—is still an enigma for all but experienced users, I can't think of an easier or more powerful program for writing custom applications on the Amiga.

—Dave Johnson



The tool strip on the redesigned CanDo 3.0 main panel shows some of the program's 28 tools.

Motion Master, Volumes I & II

MetroGrafx, $149.95 each

All LightWave-equipped Amigas.
2.x/3.x compatible.
Hard-drive installable.
Not copy protected.
Accelerator compatible.
***Minimum system*: LightWave 3.1 and AmigaDOS 2.1 or later.**
***Recommended system*: 8MB RAM, hard drive, accelerator.**

Time-saving animation utilities for LightWave.

No 3-D animation package in existence has every capability any user could possibly want, and LightWave is no exception. Motion Master is a new collection of eight modules (four per volume) to augment LightWave animation. Each module performs a specialized task that would be quite difficult to implement manually. With the exception of TimeMachine, all the modules open up in a small window on the Workbench screen. And most of them are fairly simple to operate, although they may not make much sense until you've read the manual.

Flocking and Recording

Starting with Volume I, PathFlock, as the name implies, creates scenes of flocking objects that follow a target object along a specified path. There are numerous controls, including settings for object avoidance and for how chaotic you want the generated motions to be. In addition, there's an animated displacement map you can apply to each object in the flock, making it easy to have the birds in a flock flap their wings. Moreover, you can select a randomizer that makes each flock member's displacement motion different from that of the rest.

The MouseRecorder module captures the Y position of the mouse with respect to time and uses the data to generate either an envelope or one channel ►

of a motion file. It captures the data at a rate of 30 samples per second for as long as you hold down the left mouse button within the capture window. A counter displays the total elapsed time, and a list with a scroll bar allows you to view the numerically captured data.

When you are finished recording mouse motions, clicking on Save Data brings up an options window. From here you specify whether to create an envelope or motion, which motion channel to apply the data to, and what values to use for the maximum and minimum. MouseRecorder is perfect for quickly creating pseudorandom events for jittered object motion or flickering light intensity.

Sound and Time

ExtractAudio is similar to MouseRecorder in that it creates an envelope or motion file with the same options. However, the data driving the envelope comes from a standard 8svx IFF audio sample. The sound is subsampled down to 30Hz, using the average amplitude to set the value in the envelope/motion. The duration of the sample determines the duration of the envelope. By digitizing the soundtrack to your animation, you can create lights that strobe to the music or make the needle of a sound meter bounce to the audio level. You can even make it act as a poor man's lip sync by using it to drive the morph envelope of a character's mouth.

TimeMachine, the most complex tool in Volume I, eases the task of creating multitarget morph animations. The interface is a timeline graph. You load morph targets along the left-side y-axis and place points along the timeline to specify the degree of morph from one target to the next. Envelope settings on the graph can range from 0 to 75% in 25% increments. The graph visual lends intuitiveness to what can be a daunting task.

Below the graph is a "dialog box," where you may enter a time-dependent enunciation of the words being used. Unfortunately, it is difficult to set up this box with the time-synced words. And even when the dialog is complete, setting effective morph targets based on it is neither automatic nor easy. While TimeMachine makes designing complex morphs a bit simpler, I think it needs some work to make it an effective lip-sync tool.

Volume II

Moving on to the second volume, the Child2World module performs one of the most requested LightWave functions: unparenting an object from its hierarchy. While this initially appears as a simple operation, the math involved is surprisingly complex.

Child2World requires motion files for the hierarchy, from the top-most parent down to the child object being unparented. From these, it generates a motion file for the child that represents parented motion without the object actually being parented. You may then alter this motion as you wish, but the unedited keyframes give the impression that the object is parented. The only drawback is that the software doesn't currently parse for repeatend behavior in the motion files.

PointAt is similar to Child2World, except that it allows you to make an object "point at" or target another object. Used for such things as making a character's eyes follow a flying insect, PointAt lets you use a light or camera to target an object, just as in LightWave.

VolumeCube is a procedural animation tool that creates random motion for a collection of objects within the confines of a user-defined volume. Like Path-

Continued on p. 54.



A500/A2000
$ 159.00
A1200/A3000/A4000
$ 179.00

Picasso II RTG

Hardware of the year 1993 and 1994



Picasso II RTG, the graphics board all others are measured against:

- Graphics board for all Amiga's with Zorro-Bus - Workbench driver to retarget all programs and WB to the Picasso
- Supports up to 256 colors with WB3.1, even on A2000 and A3000
- WB resolutions definable up to 1600 x 1280 pixels
- HiColor (16Bit) and TrueColor (24Bit) graphics: 16M colors!
- Drivers for most graphic programs such as AdPro, ImageFX, ImageMaster, Real3D
- Allows connection of any VGA or Multiscan monitor
- A1084 and A1081 are still usable with a special cable
- Black borders gone forever, takes full advantage of monitor's capabilities
- System-compliant implementation of monitorfile, resolution selec table using screen mode-requester
- Monitor-File compliant with System 2.x or higher, resolution selectable using screenmode requester
- View regular Amiga and special PicassoII-RTG screens on same Monitor without changing cables.
- Screen promoter to make older programs work on Picasso
- Draggable screens
- Available with 1MB or 2MB, upgra dable from 1MB to 2MB at anytime

2 MB **$ 599.00**

1 MB **$ 519.00**



Ariadne

Don't get overwhelmed with the complexity of setting up a network, use our Ariadne Ethernet card that is compatible with all Amigas that have an available Zorro Slot. This card is not only easy to network - it also equipped with 2 additional parallel ports offering multiple network solutions.

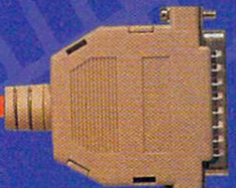
- 10Base-2 (Thin Ethernet, coax-cable) and 10Base-T (Twisted pair, western jacket)
- Socket for Boot-ROM
- SANA-II compatible driver for ethernet and parallel port
- Hook up to two additional Amigas to the parallel ports with Liana
- 32KByte cache to support CPU
- Includes Commodore's Envoy networking software
- English manual

$ 349.00

Liana

Are you in need of a fast and easy connection between two Amiga's? Liana, the low-cost network solution, is exactly what you want! Just plug it in, install the software, and it runs! Nothing could be easier than that. Liana is the network solution for those with a small budget and big needs. You can even share your hard drives and printers.

- For every (!) Amiga from WB 2.0 on with a free parallel port
- Includes cable
- Includes Commodore's Envoy networking software
- English manual
- automatically reconnection after (re-)booting without new startup
- Every machine usable as server and client



$ 99.00

MainActor Professional



Open your mind and dreams to the world of great animations, what Picasso users have been doing for a long time with the demo and full versions,you can do, too. MainActor Professional offers a high degree of functionality including multi-platform support (i.e. .AVI and .FLI animation file formats

- Synchronize animations with sound effects
- Supports several graphic boards with special loader modules
- Uses 24Bit files
- Play animations directly from RAM or from hard drive
- Convert animations and picture formats
- Playable within a window on WB
- Complete ARexx-support
- Supports 14 different animation file formats
- Supports Video-For-Windows format
- Special, fast animation format for Picasso II

$ 99.00



Pablo

The video module, Pablo, expands your Picasso II with two new video outputs. Using the Pablo, you can view your Picasso output on any TV or VCR. All with quality that you would only expect to see from broadcast video encoders. That is why the Picasso II video encoder module, Pablo, won in the (German) magazine 'Amiga Magazin' (issue 5/94) test for video encoders.

- Three cables included: RCA, S-VHS and SCART
- 5 floppy disks with drivers, animation demos and more
- 24Bit Animation program included
- 15kHz overload protection
- 2 well written manuals
- Plugs onto the Picasso II - no Zorro-Slot required
- Easy installation of video modes

$ 199.00

VILLAGE TRONIC

Within Europe contact
Wellweg 95 D- 31157 Sarstedt - Germany
Tel: +49/(0)5066/7013-10 technical Hotline
Tel: +49/(0)5066/7013-11 Orders
Tel: +49/(0)5066/7013-40 Mailbox
Tel: +49/(0)5066/7013-49 FAX

Within North America contact
Amiga Library Services
Authorized North American Representative
610 North Alma School Road - Suite 18
Chandler, Arizona 85224-3687 USA
Voice/Fax (602) 917-0917



Help Lines!

"Help! Time Is Running Out. I'll Try To Hang On . . ."



LIKE POOR OLD Harold Lloyd (opposite) in the silent flick *Distress,* many Amiga users have been hanging tough since the demise of Commodore. But they need all the assistance they can get. We've sent an *AW* team out to scour the countryside to find available sources of support and information. The results of their efforts are presented here in a special "Help" feature covering four different areas of assistance: Amiga Dealers, Online Support, Amiga Reference Books, and Amiga Users' Groups. ►

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE



"Is There An Amiga Dealer In The House?"

—SHELDON LEEMON

When Commodore closed its doors last year, many worried Amiga owners simply assumed that their local dealer would soon do the same. After all, how could anyone continue to be an Amiga dealer with almost no Amiga computers available to sell? As it turns out, however, these worried owners badly underestimated the amount of dedication, resourcefulness, and perseverance that Amiga dealers could muster in the face of adversity. When, at the prompting of our readers, we started looking into the question of just how many Amiga dealers were staying the course, we were both surprised and pleased by what we found. By all indications, most of the Amiga dealers who have believed in the product, understood it, and stuck by it all these years not only continue to support their loyal customers, but continue to be successful enough to keep going for a long while to come.

We talked to a number of these dealers, to see how they were getting on with life after Commodore. Most were upbeat, and what they had to say should prove to be both informative and encouraging to Amiga owners. *(For addresses and phone numbers of dealers profiled here—plus those of dealers recommended by other Amiga users—see the sidebar "Finding Amiga Dealers," p. 15.)*

The Computer Room
Aurora, Colorado

The Computer Room is a family business, run by John Sobernheim Jr. and his father, John Sr. They've been at it since 1981, and have been Amiga dealers since 1985, when the computer was first introduced.

John cites three areas of his business that haven't changed much since Commodore's demise. First, there are a large number of current Amiga owners who are still buying hardware upgrades and software. Despite the uncertainty over the future of Commodore, upgrade hardware is readily available, and during the Christmas '94 season, new software titles were still appearing at the rate of from five to ten a week. Second, like many Amiga dealers, the Computer Room has developed considerable expertise in desktop video, a field whose popularity is booming. Finally, John reports a substantial number of customers who are interested in the Amiga strictly as an entertainment system. Continued availability of CD32 machines and a growing library of CD32 software titles have given this market a boost.

John also sees a trend that current Amiga owners should find particularly encouraging: "As certain items like 1084 monitors and Amiga 500 RAM-expansion products are getting scarcer, they are becoming more valuable on the used market. I've seen used 1084 monitors selling for the same price we used to charge for new ones."

MicroTech Solutions
Aurora, Illinois

If nothing else, our impromptu survey demonstrated the Amiga is popular in towns named Aurora. For further confirmation, you need only look to Aurora, Illinois, home to MicroTech Solutions, a suburban Chicago dealership (as well as the setting of the two *Wayne's World* movies). Although some retailers like to hedge their bets by carrying other computer lines, owner John Crookshank has confined his operation strictly to Commodore computers since he began his first repair shop in 1983. Despite the current atmosphere of uncertainty, John believes that it is important for him to retain a strong identification with the Amiga. "Focus is very important in retailing," he says. "Instead of trying to be all things to all people, you've got to identify what makes you different, and then do whatever it takes to serve the market that you've chosen."

John feels that the philosophy of building a long-term relationship with his customers has helped him make the best of a bad situation. Since he has always concentrated on repeat business, rather than on getting a constant stream of new customers in the door, he has a large base of users that he can continue to serve. John feels that his focus on selling solutions, rather than dazzling technology, has also paid off. Over the last five years, his typical user has changed from the casual hobbyist to the professional user who looks to the Amiga because it allows him or her to perform a specific task better than anything else on the market. These customers, he feels, are the ones who are going to stick with the Amiga as long as it continues to do that job better than anything else on the market.

Slipped Disk
Madison Heights, Michigan

Slipped Disk, a suburban Detroit Amiga dealership, started out in 1983 as a computer club for Commodore-64 owners. "In those days, support was one of a computer owner's most important needs," says owner Jeff Moscow, "and despite all of the advances made in the last ten years, support is now more important than ever." The store added computer hardware and software sales to its business in 1985, when it picked up the Amiga, but has kept both the club facilities and the club attitude. "Amiga dealers like working with computers and people," Moscow says. "It's not the route you take if you are looking to get rich quick." To maintain this friendly attitude, Slipped Disk holds annual events such as a picnic and a computer auction.

These days, the sign outside the store reads, Multimedia and Computer Center. "Most people think that IBM and Apple invented multimedia two years ago," says Moscow, "but when people come in the store, we can look them in the eye and tell them that we've been working with multimedia for ten years." Not surprisingly, video and multimedia users form the core of his customer base. The store hosts a monthly 3-D special-

ILLUSTRATED BY RAYMOND MEDICI

Finding Amiga Dealers

IN ADDITION TO the dealers profiled in the main article (addresses and phone numbers of whom are given below), I've also included some dealers recommended by other Amiga users (also see below). But how can you locate an Amiga dealer if you don't know of one in your area? Here are some suggestions:

1. Look at the ads for mail-order dealers in *AmigaWorld* and other magazines. Many mail-order suppliers also operate a storefront. Don't limit yourself to Amiga magazines, either. Many dealers who advertise in video magazines as "Video Toaster Specialists" are actually Amiga dealers in disguise. Likewise, those simply advertising software and hardware products sometimes do double duty as dealers, as well.

2. Ask other Amiga owners. Let them know that you are looking for support, and ask them if they've had good experiences dealing with anyone locally, or even not so locally. If you have a local users' group, ask the memebers. If you have a modem, try to find a bulletin-board service that supports Amiga users. Normally, if you can find one local board, it will have listings of others in the area, usually indicating what kind of computers they support.

3. Ask third-party hardware and software producers. If you're interested in a particular product, the vendor probably knows which retailers are familiar with its products, and which ones are capable of helping you should a problem arise.

If you find an Amiga dealer who is willing to help you, remember to support that dealer when it comes time to purchase additional hardware or software. Many dealers report that with Commodore out of the picture, they've been called on to do more support than ever, so it's only fair that you support them in return.

Amiga Dealers

Here are the names and addresses of the dealers mentioned in the main article:

The Computer Room
27600 S. Havana St.
Aurora, CO 80014
303/696-8973

MicroTech Solutions
1885 N. Farnsworth, Suite 7
Aurora, IL 60605
708/851-3033

Slipped Disk
170 West 12 Mile Rd.
Madison Heights, MI 48071
810/546-3475

Clackamas Computers
PO Box 769
Clackamas, OR 97015
503/656-3866

Mr. Hardware Computers
59 Storey Ave.
Central Islip, NY 11722
516/234-8810

Computer Basics
1490 N. Hermitage Rd.
Hermitage, PA 16148
412/962-0533

DeVine Computer Sales
25 S. Old Baltimore Pike
Suite 202
Newark, DE 19702
302/739-9046

User-Recommended Dealers

While writing this article, I asked for recommendations from users on CompuServe. Here are some of the replies that I received:

From Mario E. Aguilar 74603,3245:

The Lively Computer
La Mesa, CA
619/589-9455

From Ed Roos 70446,1231:

Century Computer Systems
841 Whittier Blvd.
La Habra, CA
310/607-6977

I have been in the computer business as a programmer/systems analyst for 25 years and have not found anyone more capable or honest than those folks.

From Phillip A. Cochran 75667,241:

Applied Computer Systems
(North side of Sacramento)
6108 Watt Ave.
North Highlands, CA 95660
Voice: 916/338-2000
Fax: 916/338-2004
BBS: 916/338-2543 (very good sysop)

From John M. Collier 72172,1363:

Better Concepts
New City, NY
914/639-5095

From Karl Kugel 72467,2474:

KJ Computers
Granada Hills, CA
818/366-5305

They are absolutely first-rate.

From Ron Legro 75136,2066:

Safe Harbor
Waukesha, WI

This mail-order shop also has a store front. They're bona fide Amiga fans.

From Dale L. Larson/IAM 76702,654:

Software Hut
Folcroft East Business Park
313 Henderson Dr.
Sharon Hill, PA 19079
800/848-0079

Software Hut does a lot more mail-order than retail, but it does have a store front—which means one of the largest selections of Amiga software available anywhere. Members of our local users' groups usually have lots of good things to say about how they've been treated by the Hut.

From Betty Clay/SYSOP 76702,337:

Metropolitan Computers
4372 Spring Valley Rd.
Dallas, TX
214/702-9119.

From Jim Wallis 73641,360:

Creative Equipment Int'l (CEI)
Miami, FL
305/266-2800

Been with CEI since 1987, and it's been the best dealerhip of any sort that I have ever dealt with.

From Steve K.:

Basic Fundamentals Co.
3366 South 2300 E.
Salt Lake City, UT 84109
801/466-8084

Reid Swenson has been keeping the Amiga alive in Utah with just the help of Armadillo Brothers. His hours at that phone number are Monday-Thursday, 4-6:30PM MST. □

—*SL*

interest group meeting hosted by noted animators such as Dale Myers and Jon Tindal, author of Sparks and other 3-D software.

Moscow, a ten-year veteran of the computer wars, finds it surprising and a bit amusing when users question if he can stay in business now that Commodore has gone. "I tell them that the only thing more difficult than staying in business without Commodore's help is staying in business with Commodore's help. If I could survive that for ten years, then I can certainly survive this." The only regret he has about Commodore's passing is that he never got to be president of the company. "After all," he says, "almost everybody else did."

Moscow says that he is often kidded about the store's unusual name, but feels that the play on words works to his advantage. "I can't tell you how many people have come in looking for a chiropractor, and gone out carrying an Amiga system."

Clackamas Computers
Clackamas Oregon

When Don Sorenson, an Amiga dealer in this suburb of Portland, found that he could no longer buy Amiga computers through the normal distribution channels, he turned to a less conventional source. "We used our mailing list to solicit used computers from our customers," says Sorenson. Selling the same computers over and over again may not be business as usual in the computer game, but it works for Clackamas Computers. Because of innovative concepts like Amiga recycling, the store actually had a better year in 1994 than in 1993, a claim that few computer dealers, let alone Amiga dealers, can make.

Like most remaining Amiga dealers, Clackamas specializes in those areas in which the Amiga excels, namely video and multimedia. Like many, it carries the Video Toaster, RGB's AmiLink system, and Scala's InfoChannel. To supplement sales of hardware upgrades and software, Clackamas has its own Amiga product line, which includes the B.E.S.T. accounting software package and the V.I.P. video encoder.

Despite the long delay in resolving the status of the Amiga, Don thinks that Commodore's demise may help the Amiga, rather than kill it. He believes that sometime soon, one of the bidders will acquire the rights and once again begin producing Amiga computers. When that happens, he plans to pick up where he left off last spring.

Mr. Hardware Computers
Central Islip, (Long Island), New York

There's no mistaking which computer this dealer supports. When you call Mr. Hardware, a phone-mail system answers, announcing that it is running on an Amiga. When you talk to Joe Rothman, the owner, he is quick to point out that his business has never sold anything but Amiga gear, and that the Amiga is the only computer he uses in running his business. About the only thing that Joe doesn't like about the Amiga is the emulation products that allow it to run IBM and Mac software, since he thinks that erodes the market for native Amiga software packages.

Mail-Order Tips

MAIL ORDER IS a convenient alternative for those of us who don't have a dealer within driving distance. You make a simple phone call, and anything you want (relatively speaking) can be delivered to your door in a couple of days. The downside is that when you have a problem, you can't take the item back to the person from whom you bought it and wait there until you get satisfaction. Here are a few tips for avoiding mail-order hassles:

1. One of the most frequent complaints about mail-order vendors is that they sometimes take orders for items that aren't in stock, and don't tell you that you'll have to wait for delivery. The worst offenders have even been known to charge your credit-card account before shipping the product. You can help avoid this problem by asking for a firm delivery date and letting them know that you'll be calling back if the delivery is late. Make a note of the time and date you placed the order, and get an order number if possible.

2. Hidden charges for shipping and handling are another potential pitfall. Don't just assume that the price you'll pay is the price you see in the ad. Find out what the total cost is—including shipping. Ask what the shipping weight is, and how the goods will be shipped. A $10 charge for ground shipment of a $40 game that weighs about a pound would be out of line, but the same charge would be quite reasonable for next-day delivery.

3. Almost any company will do when the item that you buy works perfectly, but it's another story when your purchase doesn't work, or even worse, works perfectly on another system but not on yours. Don't assume that everything will go smoothly. Ask if the company has its own service department, and if technical-support people will be able to assist you if problems arise. Ask about their credentials. Determine exactly what the return policy is if you find that the item doesn't meet your needs, or you just plain can't get it to work right. Find out if the company charges any "restocking fees" for items that work for them but not for you.

4. Ask questions about a product before you buy. Experienced sales people will be able not only to answer your questions, but also to ask you some questions of their own (such as what kind of system you're using, what version of Workbench, how much RAM you have, and so on). If they can't answer your questions before the sale, the chances aren't good that they'll be able to do so afterwards.

5. Ask for recommendations from satisfied users. Find out if your friends or members of a local users' group have had particularly good (or bad) experiences with a particular vendor. If you are online, ask for recommendations from other users. Such comments as "They fixed my problem fast" or "I had to fight them for months" can help you to make a decision in a hurry. □

—SL

Although Mr. Hardware has been a dealership for only about three years, Joe has been an Amiga owner since September of 1985. He believes that the AMUG bulletin-board system that he operates is the longest-running all-Amiga board in the country, having been in continuous operation since March 10, 1986 (and he invites all Amiga modem owners to call the board at 516/234-6056). Joe went from hobbyist to doing repairs (he's been a technician for more than twenty years), and then added sales to his service business. Now, he runs the business as a one-man (and one-computer) operation—selling, diagnosing, and troubleshooting.

Joe prides himself on solving particularly difficult hardware problems. "They don't call me Mr. Hardware for nothing," he says. He doesn't charge his customers for looking at their machines and making a diagnosis, and says that he is willing to help any Amiga owner who has a problem he or she hasn't been able to solve.

As if selling and servicing Amigas weren't enough, Joe also markets a couple of software products that he and his wife have developed using Superbase (now SBase). These are Retail Escort, a point-of-sale and inventory system for retailers, and Video Escort, an accounting package that handles every aspect of a videographer's business. Even though there's a Windows version of Superbase, don't bother waiting for the PC versions of these programs. Joe says that he wouldn't consider porting them to the IBM.

As for selling any other brand of computer, Joe is indignant even at the thought. "I think that everything else out there is junk, and I would be doing the world a disservice if I supported junk." Although he expects that somebody will acquire rights to the Amiga in the near future, his plans don't hinge on whether or not that happens. "Even if that doesn't happen, I'll keep doing what I'm doing, trying my best to keep my customers happy and productive. If there aren't any new machines, then I'll become a broker for used ones. As long as there is an installed base of Amiga owners looking for support, I'll be there to support them."

The Few, The Proud, The Amiga Dealer

When talking to Amiga dealers, I heard some common themes repeated over and over. Most of these dealers had been with the Amiga for a long time (many since the machine was introduced), and some had been Commodore dealers before the Amiga. Most of the successful dealers have become desktop-video specialists, and have embraced products like the Video Toaster as a way of establishing their identity in the marketplace. Several have developed their own Amiga hardware or software products, or have become distributers of such products. Successful dealers have focused on support, and on developing long-term relationships with their customers.

Although some dealers have closed their doors since Commodore's demise, Amiga owners should bear in mind that dealers have come and gone throughout the past ten years. Even in Commodore's heyday, there never were Amiga dealers on every corner. Sadly, there are major metropolitan areas that have never had a solid Amiga dealership. Whether because of mismanaged marketing, or public misunderstanding, or just because the machine was ahead of its time, the Amiga has always been a special product for special people. As long as there are users who appreciate the Amiga, however, and want to stick with it, there will be dealers there to support them.

In researching this article, I have talked to a lot of dedicated Amiga dealers, and I regret that there was not enough space to profile all of them. I would particularly like to thank Amiga stalwarts John Salerno of DeVine Computer Systems in Newark, Delaware, and Bill Smith of Computer Basics in Hermitage, Pennsylvania, for taking time out of their busy schedules to answer a lot of questions.

Do you have an Amiga dealership that deserves special recognition for dedication beyond the call of duty? Drop us a note giving the name, address, and phone number of your dealer, and we'll share your recommendations with our readers in an upcoming issue.

"Hello? Where Can I Find Online Support?"

—TIM WALSH



Before getting online became a trendy pastime, only certain seasoned Amiga users spent a large percentage of their waking hours on the commercial networks and the Internet, asking and answering questions, exchanging tips and advice at every turn, and providing others with plenty of files to download.

Times change, and even the most diehard Amiga holdouts who've postponed getting a modem are finding it increasingly tough to get information from traditional sources, such as dealers and users' groups. With Commodore in the midst of a lengthy liquidation process, authorized dealers are few and far between and Amiga users' groups continue to dwindle in numbers at an alarming rate. The networks, however, provide plenty of support, with active communities of Amiga professionals and enthusiasts, as well as lots of software, much of which is almost free for the taking.

Clinging On?

Frequent readers of Amiga-specific magazines or newsletters can learn a lot about the public-domain and freely distributable Amiga offerings found on the nets, but are likely to find only occasional mention of useful commercial software that's also online. Yet, there has been a steady proliferation of third-party developers online, and many of the latest upgrades and patch software for their products appear in their respective areas on the nets.

With a few minutes of online searching and downloading, you can often save yourself days of unneces- ►

sary work by retrieving ready-made items. There's a multitude of other online offerings, too, such as clip art, fonts, objects, and textures—items that no serious Amiga users can live without.

You can also find online sources of information that could enable your Amiga live a longer, more prosperous life. If your Amiga is experiencing problems and you desperately need to get advice about parts or service, you can post a message detailing your problem on one of the Amiga sections and often quickly get a diagnosis or helpful advice in return. And sometimes you'll form alliances and friendships with other Amiga users in the process.

Where To Be

While waning Amiga support in all the areas is currently a serious problem, there are still ample resources from which to glean information in cyberspace. Here are some of the Amiga hot spots on the commercial networks, BIX, CompuServe, GEnie, and Portal. Lackluster Amiga coverage and support on Delphi keeps it from inclusion in this listing. An online Amiga newsletter, *Amiga Report*, is also out there to provide information and support. (All telephone numbers given below are voice numbers.)

BIX
800/695-4882
617/354-4137

Even though it lacks some of the Amiga activity and growth it enjoyed a few years ago, a wealth of information, files, and Amiga-savvy users still remain on BIX. While numbers are down from a few years ago, the activity level is still substantial by any standard, and a link to the Internet doesn't hurt this network's popularity, either. A mid-December Amiga file count revealed more than 1700 files for the picking, including a number of patches for commercial software, such as IAM's DiskSalv 3 (see "Reviews," Feb. '95, p. 38).

A quick tour of BIX reveals no fewer than 13 Amiga-specific areas, including that of *AmigaWorld*. An especially interesting and useful area is amiga.dev, which, as its name implies, is the conference for Amiga developers. Ex-Commodore employees and third-party developers continue to frequent that area, while quite a few others check in on occasion. You can search by keywords on any subject in a matter of minutes in this area (and the 12 other Amiga areas as well), since all the message archives covering numerous subjects are still available within it.

Many of the companies that continue to maintain their own areas on BIX include Digital Creations, Black Belt Systems, Softwood, and Expert Services. If a particular company isn't represented on BIX, there are usually numerous experts present to assist with quality information about any question that may arise. Need help with a Toaster hardware problem, or experiencing difficulty with the latest DPaint? Just post your troubles as a message in one of the Amiga areas on BIX, and you'll probably get a helpful answer to almost any question in a day or two. If you're bashful about proclaiming your dilemma for all of BIXdom to see, just e-mail your question to one of the Amiga sysops for a speedy response.

CompuServe
800/848-8199
614/457-0802

It's no secret that CompuServe offers generous amounts of Amiga-specific information for the taking. First, the Amiga area is broken down into five forums: Amiga Arts, Amiga Tech, Amiga User, Amiga Vendor, and Amiga File Finder. Of these, the Amiga Vendor forum's Libraries Menu is where you'll find Amiga companies, with lengthy lists of files for upgrading and patching existing software, stand-alone utilities and accessory programs, and online tech help. While nearly all of these areas have suffered from waning support in recent years, there's still some reasonably good activity to be found.

Thousands of Amiga files fill CompuServe's Amiga libraries. The Amiga User forum is composed of 18 library sections, while the Arts and Tech libraries comprise 17 and 12 sections, respectively. As with its Macintosh and PC counterparts on CompuServe, Amiga File Finder is simply a reference area used to quickly scan and search those myriad files.

The Amiga Arts, Tech, and User forums are divided into a series of message bases, which are further subdivided into a series of sections. For instance, for the latest mix of gossip and facts (sorry—you're on your own in trying to distinguish between the two), you can go to Section 3, Hot News and Rumors, in the Amiga User forum. Within these sections, you can post questions, scan for used equipment, make new friends with similar interests, and generally have a good time. I liken each one of these forums to an impromptu users'-group meeting that you can attend at your own convenience.

If you're seeking upgrades to your existing software or looking for helpful files, it doesn't hurt to check out the available files in the Vendor forum. As with BIX, you needn't seek a company representative to ask questions about your software package. Rather, you can usually obtain useful information quite quickly by simply posting a question in several of the message bases. You'll usually get an answer in a few days or less, depending on the complexity of the question and the activity level at the time of posting.

GEnie
800/638-9636

A first-rate source of online help, GEnie's Amiga forum is called the Amiga Roundtable, and it's nothing if not complete. Unlike CompuServe's separate forums, GEnie's Amiga Roundtable consists of two large forums, the Pro/Am Roundtable and the Starship Amiga.

Both the Pro/Am Roundtable and the Starship Amiga are broken down into message bases and file libraries, with Pro/Am containing 13 library sections and the more heavily traveled Starship possessing more than 40. There are many thousands of Amiga files in the Starship libraries.

Starship's message base consists of more than 30 sections, including 12 for vendors. Black Belt Systems, INOVAtronics, Migraph, and Nova Designs are but a few of the companies found here. Getting product support is easy, as most of the Amiga companies found in

this roundtable actively support their areas, with other users filling in the gaps. One Amiga company that maintains an above-normal visibility on GEnie is PageStream developer, Soft-Logik. Its menu option at the top of the Amiga Roundtable whisks you away to Soft-Logik's own individual area.

Portal
800/433-6444
408/973-9111

When it comes to Amiga support, Portal easily qualifies as one of the more interesting networks. While a "GO AMIGA" command reveals only a few menu entries to choose from (File Libraries, Fish Disks, Message Bases, and Moderators' Area), there's a lot more there than initially meets the eye. In particular, File Libraries reveals almost 40 separate collections of files. The Fish Disks entry contains all the useful Fred Fish disks in their entirety. (Portal was the first commercial network to accomplish this feat.)

Message-wise, the Message Bases section contains the Amiga Usenet area, which is further broken down into 16 subareas. Selecting any of these subareas gives you a menu of messages straight from the famed I-way, literally opening up a world of opportunity in the process. If you're in search of general information concerning Amiga software or hardware, you can check out the Graphics, Hardware, or Programmer sections in the Usenet area.

For the latest gossip on the Internet concerning the Amiga, you can check out Section 12 (Misc). As its name implies, you'll find there a conglomeration of news and ramblings pertaining to all manner of Amiga doings. Marketplace, which is another Usenet section, is the place to look for notices of Amiga equipment and software for sale.

Portal's Amiga-specific message sections run the gamut from AGA Discussions to CDTV/CD32, and there's even an all-new Amiga Mosaic section. If you're looking for files on Portal, there are almost 40 sections offering everything from ARexx programs to clip art, all nicely organized for quick retrieval. If you're seeking online Amiga companies on Portal, roughly a dozen lie in wait.

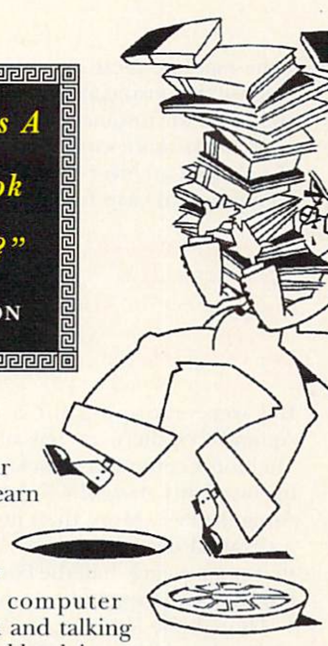
Amiga Report
Internet e-mail: jcompton@bbs.xnet.com
Fax: 708/741-0689

To round out our examination of the online help area, there's also an excellent Amiga "electronic newsletter." If you're looking for a great source of online information, *Amiga Report* is just the ticket. Compiled by Jason Compton, Robert Niles, and David Tiberio, *Amiga Report* provides weekly updates on the Commodore liquidation situation, plus other news, online happenings, new products, and a little bit of humor and rumor, to boot. Its most notable claim to fame was its publishing—in their entirety—of all the CEI/Commodore online conferences that were held on the major networks this past fall.

Presented in AmigaGuide format, *Amiga Report* is intended to be an easy read, and it has proved extremely helpful to beginner and expert alike.

"Maybe There's A Reference Book I Could Read?"

—DAVE JOHNSON



Need help with your Amiga? Want to learn more about using the Shell, how a hard drive is organized, or whatever? With fewer computer experts walking the walk and talking the talk these days, a good book is a great substitute. We've rounded up seven of the most current literary offerings and reviewed them for you here. *(To contact the publishers cited here, consult the "Manufacturers'/Distributors' Addresses" list on p. 62.)*

Amiga Workbench A–Z
Bruce Smith
Bruce Smith Books, £14.95
ISBN 1-873308-28-0

Part of the "Insider Guide" series from Bruce Smith Books, this 250-page reference work claims to be the "definitive guide" to Workbench 3. The book describes every Workbench topic, menu item, command, and utility in alphabetical order. Read straight through, it may be confusing to read about, say, ClickToFront before the book has gotten around to defining Commodities. As a reference, however, the book flows just fine, and I love its comprehensive "file locator," an index of sorts that identifies exactly where to look on disk for every part of the Workbench. On the other hand, I found much of the information a bit superficial. When discussing datatypes, for instance, there is no mention of how to install their components, nor is there an adequate description of the Workbench's new formatting options.

Amiga Disks and Drives
Paul Overaa
Bruce Smith Books, £14.95
ISBN 1-873308-34-5

This book, another "Insider Guide," covers so much ground that "disks and drives" is simply a common thread that passes through all of the chapters. Discussing topics as varied as hard-disk basics, AmigaDOS commands, viruses, and how to install new software on a hard disk, it does try to cover it all. Yet, it contains a wealth of information that the typical user—and even the advanced user, for that matter—is unlikely to know already. On the whole, most of the book's information is not mission-critical, but fun to read nonetheless. While the book often goes into harrowing detail on ►

some matters, there are other occasions when important stuff is conspicuous by its absence. When discussing archivers, for instance, the author describes how compression software works, but then demonstrates the use of only one archiver—ZOO— which hasn't been used on a practical basis for years.

AmigaDOS Reference Guide
Sheldon Leemon
Compute Books, $15 post paid
(sold only by Sheldon Leemon)
ISBN 0-87455-268-0

If I were shopping for a comprehensive look at AmigaDOS, there are few authors I'd trust more than Sheldon Leemon, a true Amiga veteran. He has now updated his *AmigaDOS Reference Guide* to include AmigaDOS 3. More than just a reference, it includes a detailed introduction to the Shell and AmigaDOS that spans nearly half the book. The tutorials start with the basics and extend to sophisticated script files.

Though the *Reference Guide* is authoritative and complete, the command-reference section's turgid style reminds me all too much of Fortran texts I used in college. On the other hand, this book does in one convenient volume most of what the next two titles do taken together.

Mastering AmigaDOS 3: Reference
Mark Smiddy
Bruce Smith Books, £21.95
ISBN 1-873308-08-6

Mastering AmigaDOS 3: Reference covers much of the same information as Leemon's tome in a much lighter style. Each works the same beat—AmigaDOS commands—but there are some important differences. The emphasis in Smiddy's book is understandability; plain English explanations dominate, and page breaks divide every command, making the book much easier on the eye.

While half of Leemon's book is dedicated to introducing AmigaDOS, Mark Smiddy dives right into command descriptions almost on page one; if you're looking to learn AmigaDOS from scratch, this isn't the book to start with. He rounds out his book by discussing viruses, the IFF format, and AmigaGuide files. The only book around that explains AmigaGuide in detail, *Mastering AmigaDOS 3* tells you enough to let you create your own help files.

Mastering AmigaDOS 3: Tutorial
Mark Smiddy and Bruce Smith
Bruce Smith Books, £21.95
ISBN 1-873308-20-5

A companion to *Mastering AmigaDOS 3: Reference*, this tutorial is a detailed introduction to the intricacies of AmigaDOS. It is appropriate for the absolute beginner—it explains, for instance, that a space is required between words in the command line—but it does get into advanced topics like scripting with variables. The Tutorial doesn't stand on its own very well; it isn't a complete look at AmigaDOS and, as a consequence, begs to be bought in conjunction with the more comprehensive Reference book. Together, though, they make a most recommended pair.

Denny Atkin's Best Amiga Tips and Secrets
Denny Atkin
Compute! Books, $20
(sold only by Denny Atkin)
ISBN 0-87455-275-3

Denny Atkin has been poking around the Amiga since the beginning, and his advice is always welcome. His latest book is not exactly an essential reference tool, but it is a collection of observations and neat ideas for improving the way you use your Amiga. And while many of the items that appear in Denny's book have been seen elsewhere, it does offer compact, one-stop shopping for about 200 cool tips.

Ever wonder how to permanently change the RAM disk icon? Halt a background task? Some of his tips are just plain common sense (in order to see all the files in a directory, choose the "Show All Files" menu item), but many others are definitely worth the price of admission.

Tips and Secrets gives up-to-date buying and upgrade advice, as well as guidelines on optimizing your system, using emulators, and recording video. (Perhaps my favorite tip, though, is his advice on cooking macaroni and cheese!) An updated 2nd edition is now available in a disk-based format using AmigaGuide indexing features.

Connect Your Amiga!
A Guide to the Internet, LANs, BBSs and Online Services
Dale L. Larson
Intangible Assets Manufacturing, $24.95
ISBN 1-885876-02-5

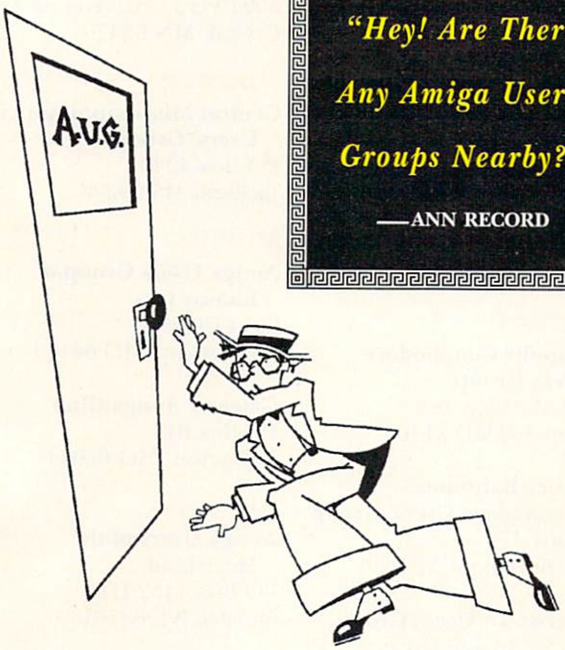
Dale Larson is a former Commodore engineer from the Amiga Networking Group. This, his first book, is a survey of networking options for your Amiga. Dale's broad treatment of telecommunications includes such diverse topics as Fax/Modems, LANs, Ethernet, ParNet, and "SneakerNet." The book is a veritable encyclopedia of Internet and networking terms.

If you are preparing to network Amigas to each other or to other PCs, this book provides advice to get you started, including a description of existing hardware and software solutions. And because Dale is one of the principal authors of the Envoy networking software, *Connect Your Amiga!* is an excellent resource for learning more about that package. If you're a novice who's never heard of an FTP or think that a Gopher is a large rodent, this book is a good place to start. The fact that it's a dedicated source of information about networking Amigas makes it unique and something virtually impossible to locate until now.

Summary

Which book you buy depends on what sort of information you're hungry for. If it's AmigaDOS you crave, choose the two Bruce Smith offerings or the single-helping *AmigaDOS Reference Guide*. *Denny Atkin's Best Amiga Tips and Secrets* is a potpourri of Amiga miscellany, while *Amiga Disks and Drives* and *Connect Your Amiga!* are full of tasty information about a broad range of topics. If you're new to Workbench 3, give *Amiga Workbench A–Z* a try. Whatever you choose, happy reading!

> ***"Hey! Are There Any Amiga Users' Groups Nearby?"***
>
> —ANN RECORD



You really can't do better than to get by with a little help from your friends. Amiga users' groups are a great resource that's right next door. *(Please send corrections or additions to this directory to AUG listing, c/o AmigaWorld, 80 Elm St., Peterborough, NH 03458.)*

ALABAMA

HACKS
PO Box 14356
Huntsville, AL 35815

ALASKA

Farthest North Amiga Users Group
PO Box 872
Barrow, AK 99723

ARKANSAS

Commodore Computer Club
PO Box 6000
Fort Smith, AR 72906

ARIZONA

Amiga Arizona
PO Box 2282
Glendale, AZ 85311

Arizona Amiga User Group
PO Box 907
Tempe, AZ 85280-0907

Arizona Commodore Users Group
PO Box 27201
Tempe, AZ 85285

Amiga Users Group of Yavapai County
1465 Coyote Road
Prescott, AZ 86303

Catalina Commodore Computer Club
PO Box 32548
Tucson, AZ 85751

Metro Amiga Computer Resource (MACRO)
PO Box 11681
Phoenix, AZ 86303

CALIFORNIA

A Bakersfield Area Commodore Users Society (ABACUS)
PO Box 40334
Bakersfield, CA 93384

Amiga Friends User Group
PO Box 4186
Huntington Beach, CA 92605

Amiga Users Group of Long Beach
3940 Lees Ave.
Long Beach, CA 90808

Amiga Users of Marin (AUM)
206 Northgate One
San Rafael, CA 94903

Amiga Users in San Francisco (AWEST)
3462-B 17th St.
San Francisco, CA 94110

Delta Sierra Amiga Users (DSAU)
c/o Computer Connection
5250 Claremont Ave., Suite 205
Stockton, CA 95207

Greater Riverside Amiga Users Group
PO Box 15
Riverside, CA 92502

HUB Area Commodore Club
PO Box 398
Camptonville, CA 95922

Los Angeles Amiga Users Group
PO Box 947
Culver City, CA 90232

Merced Amiga Group (MAGI)
PO Box 341
Atwater, CA 95301

Northern California Amiga Club
13912 Dusty Oak Trail
Bella Vista, CA 96008

Original Amiga Users Group
6435 Hillegass Ave.
Oakland, CA 94618

Redwood Empire Amiga Users Group (RE-Amiga)
PO Box 3113
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Sacramento Amiga Computer Club
PO Box 19784
Sacramento, CA 95819

Silicon Valley Video Toaster Personal Video-Production Users Group
2427 Hart Ave.
Santa Clara, CA 95050

South Bay Computer Groups
PO Box 1899
Chula Vista, CA 91912

3D Art Forum
1341 Ocean Avenue #349
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Valley Computer Club
PO Box 310
Denair, CA 95316

Ventura County Amiga Users Group and Video Forum
8842 Tacoma Street
Ventura, CA 93004

Video Toaster Group
10330 La Tuna Canyon Rd.
Sun Valley, CA 91352

COLORADO

Commodore Club of Colorado Springs
PO Box 25851
Colorado Springs, CO 80936

Rocky Mountain Amiga Users' Group
PO Box 280403
Lakewood, CO 80228

CONNECTICUT

Fairfield County Amiga Users Group
18 Great Plain Road, Suite #131
Danbury, CT 06810

Hartford Amiga Users Group
4 Bristol Street
Wethersfield, CT 06109

DELAWARE

First State Commodore Users Group
PO Box 1313
Dover, DE 19903

FLORIDA

Amiga Users' Group
306 Green Oak Dr.
Crestview, FL 32539

Amiga Virus Control
c/o Maciorowski
PO Box 724
Port Richey, FL 34673 ►

Clearwater Commodore Club
PO Box 11211
Clearwater, FL 34616

Daytona Beach Amiga Computer Enthusiasts (DBACE)
PO Box 10402
Daytona Beach, FL 32120

Miami Amiga Users Group
PO Box 16-2306
Miami, FL 33116

MICE
11110 Bird Road
Miami, FL 33165

Sarasota Manatee Amiga Users' Group
PO Box 36057
Sarasota, FL 32433

Suncoast Amiga Club
PO Box 1311
Largo, FL 34649

Suncoast Commodore Club
1351 Gulf Blvd. #216
Clearwater, FL 34630

Georgia

Amiga Atlanta, Inc.
PO Box 49103
Atlanta, GA 30359

Amiga User's Klub
4105 Windtree Lane
Columbus, GA 31907

River Rates User Group
152-F Lamkin Road
Harlem, GA 30814

Hawaii

Amiga Hawaii Users' Group (AHUG)
433 Niu St., #2
Honolulu, HI 96815

Idaho

Amiga Users of Southwest Idaho (AUSI)
PO Box 691
Boise, ID 83701-0691

Boise Area Commodore Users Group
3213 North Kelly Way
Boise, ID 83704

Illinois

Amiga Computer Enthusiasts
359 Miami St.
Park Forest, IL 60466

Champaign-Urbana Commodore Users Group
PO Box 716
Champaign, IL 61824

Commodore Club of Rockford
PO Box 10022
Rockford, IL 61131

Fox Valley Commodore User Group
PO Box 28
North Aurora, IL 60542

Knox Commodore Club
PO Box 494
Galesburg, IL 61402

McHenry County CCC
117 Wagner Drive
Cary, IL 60013

Niles Amiga Resource Committee
Niles Public Library
Computer Lab
6960 Oakton St.
Niles, IL 60714

Shawnee Amiga User Group
PO Box 865
Carbondale, IL 62903

Western Illinois Programmer's User's Group
c/o E.L. Mills
RR 5, Box 75
Quincy, IL 62301

Iowa

Commo-Hawk Commodore Users Group
PO Box 2724
Cedar Rapids, IA 52406

COUGAR
PO Box 2302
Ames, IA 50010

Des Moines Amiga Group (DMAUG)
4046 Hubbell Ave., Suite 155
Des Moines, IA 50317

Kentucky

Amiga Society of Kentuckiana
3216 Goldtree Court
Louisville, KY 40220-3307

Louisiana

Amiga Group of the New Orleans Commodore Klub (NOCK)
PO Box 8307
Metairie, LA 70011

Maryland

Annapolis Commodore Users Group
110 Lake View Drive
Annapolis, MD 21403

Another Baltimore Commodore Users' Group
PO Box 179
Glen Burnie, MD 21060

Hagerstown Users Group
1136 Sunnyside Drive
Hagerstown, MD 21742

Mid-Atlantic Video Toaster User Group (MAVTUG)
6629 Paxton Rd.
Rockville, MD 20852-3659

Massachusetts

AUSM—Amiga Users of Southeastern Mass
PO Box 50856
New Bedford, MA 02745

Michigan

Amiga Mutual Interest Group (AMIG)
PO Box 4664
East Lansing, MI 48826

Ford Amiga Computer Club
24381 Pennie
Dearborn Hts., MI 48125

Lansing Area Commodore Club
PO Box 1065
East Lansing, MI 48826

Midland Computer Club
PO Box 132
Midland, MI 48640

Minnesota

Amiga of Minnesota Interest Groups Alliance
PO Box 32374
Fridley, MN 55432

MCUA
5027 Vera Cruz Avenue N.
Crystal, MN 55429

Mississippi

Central Mississippi Amiga Users' Group
PO Box 4240
Jackson, MS 39296

Missouri

Amiga Users Group of Kansas City
9014 Central
Kansas City, MO 64114

Gateway Amiga Club
PO Box 811
Bridgeton, MO 63044

Nebraska

Amiga Users of the Heartland
PO Box 1432 DTS
Omaha, NE 68101

McCook Commodore User Group
1006 West 2nd. St.
McCook, NE 69001

New Hampshire

LightWave User Group
c/o System Eyes Computer Store
630M Milford Rd., Suite 345
Merrimack, NH 03054

New Jersey

Garden State Commodore Users Group
89 Stratford Road
Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

Oakland Amiga Club
650 Ramapo Valley Road
Oakland, NY 07436

New York

Amicus Hudson Valley
PO Box 590
Hyde Park, NY 12538

AMUSE
151 First Avenue, #182
New York, NY 10003

Binghampton Amiga Users' Group (BAUG)
c/o Gary B. Lee
332 Clifford Drive
Vestal, NY 13850

CLIC
PO Box 692
Westbury, NY 11590

Commodore Users Group of Rochester
44 Keyel Drive
Rochester, NY 14625

D'BUG of BUG
PO Box 523
Bronx, NY 10475

International MIDI Users Group
PO Box 615
Yonkers, NY 10703

Kids Computer
c/o Trocco
Science Department
St. Hilda and St. Hugh's School
619 W. 114 Street
New York, NY 10025

Queens Commodore Users Group
PO Box 129
Queens, NY 11417

West Chester Amiga Users' Group
c/o Software Links
190 E. Post Rd.
White Plains, NY 10601

New Mexico

New Mexico Amiga Users Society
PO Box 91556
Albuquerque, NM 87199

Ohio

AFIT Gazette
PO Box 4114
Dayton, OH 45401

Amiga-Dayton Users' Group
PO Box 20411
Dayton, OH 45420

CEBUG
PO Box 1461
Sandusky, OH 44870

Cleveland Area Amiga Users Group (CAAUG)
18813 Harlan Drive
Maple Hts., OH 44137-2239

David Bernard
4914 Sweetbell Court
Dayton, OH 45424

Ohio Valley Amiga Users Group
PO Box 428539
Cincinnati, OH 45252

Oklahoma

Tulsa Amiga Group
PO Box 702323
Tulsa, OK 74170

Oregon

ACCUG
PO Box 1124
Corvallis, OR 97339

Medford Interest Group Amiga, #00146
PO Box 4034
Medford, OR 97501

Northwest Amiga Group
Galleria Suite 553
921 SW Morrison St.
Portland, OR 97205

Pennsylvania

Capital Area Commodore Club
PO Box 309
Grantville, PA 17028

Philadelphia Amiga Users' Group
PO Box 8296
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Lower Bucks User Group
PO Box 397
Croydon, PA 19021

North Coast Commodore Users Group
PO Box 6117
Erie, PA 16512

Pennsylvania Amiga Computer Club
PO Box 1442
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

Pittsburgh Commodore Group
PO Box 16126
Pittsburgh, PA 15242

Scranton Commodore Users Group
PO Box 244
Scranton, PA 18501

Rhode Island

West Bay Computer Society
81 Lyndale Ave.
Warwick, RI 02852

Tennessee

Memphis Amiga Group
PO Box 752683
Memphis, TN 38175

Memphis Commodore Users Group
PO Box 34095
Memphis, TN 38134

Texas

Abilene Amiga Users' Group (A.A.U.G.)
PO Box 7682
Abilene, TX 79608

Club Amiga
PO Box 751942
Houston, TX 77275

Commodore Houston Users Group
PO box 441252
Houston, TX 77244

Concho Valley Computer Users Group
PO Box 2661
San Angelo, TX 76902

Metroplex Commodore Computer Club
PO Box 813
Bedford, TX 76095

Utah

Amiga Users Society Members
PO Box 57804
Salt Lake City, UT 84157

Virginia

ALFA (Amigold Life Forms Association)
PO Box 2893
Newport News, VA 23609

National Capital Amiga Users Group
PO Box 12360
Arlington, VA 22209

Northern Virginia Commodore & CACE
9206 Annhurst Street
Fairfax, VA 22031

Washington

Southeast Washington Amigans (SWAMI)
3320 W. Ella
Pasco, WA 99301

West Virginia

WVVTUG
PO Box 2523
Huntington, WV 25726

Wisconsin

AMOS Club USA & PD Library
PO Box 11434
Milwaukee, WI 53211

Club Commodore
PO Box 085682
Racine, WI 53408

Commodore Amiga Madison Enthusiasts Organization (CAMEO)
Box 53, Union South
227 North Randall Ave.
Madison, WI 53706

Milwaukee Area Commodore Enthusiasts
PO Box 26216
Milwaukee, WI 53226 ■



Browsing the Web

Mosaic Style!



MAYBE THE HOTTEST buzzword in telecommunications today is the World Wide Web (WWW) on the Internet. While many of you have heard about the Web, some probably have never seen it in action and don't know how to get connected to it. This article should help get you started.

So-called "browser" programs are the easiest way to navigate the Web, and the most popular—and intuitive—one is named Mosaic. While available on other platforms, Mosaic hadn't found its way to the Amiga—that is, until now. We'll look at the Amiga version, AMosaic, and show you how to add it to your system and get yourself up and running on the Web. But first a little bit about the Web.

Wonders of the Web

Perhaps the best way to describe the World Wide Web to the uninitiated might go something like this: Envision having a real-time, interactive "kiosk" on your desk (even your home desk), with a graphical, mouse-clickable interface. It has beautiful color pictures and hyperlinked hot-text buttons and even plays audio files and animations.

But this kiosk doesn't just let you navigate data on your hard drive; it's connected with and provides access to thousands of databases and computer "sites" all over the world. And it's not just limited to a few areas of interest. Like the Usenet newsgroups, virtually any subject you can think of—computers, graphics, film and television, art museums, traffic flow, fishing, politics, all branches of science, cooking, popular music, magazines, sociology, New York subways, Disneyland, you name it—is available for you to browse through in near real-time on the Web.

There are commercial Web sites. There are educational sites. The government is on it. And there's a guy who has a workstation with a camera connected to it that takes a picture of a fish tank in his office each minute, and you can download that 24-bit picture and watch his fish swim around. (With apologies to Dave Barry, I swear I am not making this up!)

The Web is immense—more vast, by far, than any encyclopedia or any hundred CD-ROMs. And while you are navigating through this world-connected kiosk, so are hundreds of thousands of other people all over the planet.

In a nutshell, that's the Web. It's ever-changing, expanding, and improving at an astronomical rate, too, and you and your Amiga can now hop onto it and become a part of it.

Bill's and Al's Excellent Web Adventure

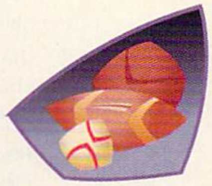
A couple of months ago, C-SPAN (the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network) broadcast a live press conference in which Vice President Al Gore demonstrated the White House's new World Wide Web site using Mosaic. Via a mouse at his speaker's podium, Gore

By Harv Laser

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT BURGER



With the intuitive, graphically oriented Internet browser program Mosaic newly available for the Amiga, you can start surfing the World Wide Web right now. Here's the nuts-and-bolts rundown on getting AMosaic up and running on your system.



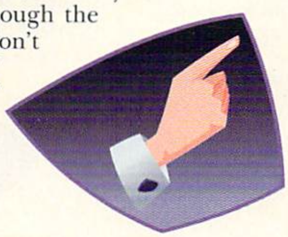
clicked around on a beautifully rendered "home page" (right) to take a tour of the Executive branch of government—showing maps, floorplans, hot-linked texts, and photographs, and playing his own audio "welcome" message.

If you were one of the millions who saw that presentation, you got a small inkling of what the Web is about—and what Mosaic can do.

Mosaic is one of a number of graphical browsers for the World Wide Web. It's been available for some of the more powerful computer platforms around (including robust PC clones, Macs, and Unix boxes). Recently, a group of devoted Amiga developers has ported this cutting-edge technology to our favorite machine and made it available to everyone—free for the taking. Many thanks to Michael Fischer, Michael Witbrock, Michael Meyer, Graham Walter, Steve Dunham, Hakan Tandogan, and Joe Rumsey, the guys who did all the AMosaic development work without compensation.

If you have an account with an Internet service provider, such as Portal, you may have played with Lynx, which is a text-only WWW browser. Lynx is slick, but it's only text, rather like an online AmigaGuide document. Comparing Mosaic to Lynx is like equating a visit to Las Vegas with reading a magazine article about some guy's visit to that city.

If you want to get going with AMosaic, however, there are some rather strict requirements, and you will need to acquire and install quite a bit of software. What follows is a basic rundown on what you'll need. As in most complicated endeavors, it's really not as tough as it looks (although the devil's in the details). So don't get discouraged by all of this—it took me about half a day to find all the soft-





Even the White House has its own Home Page—compliments of Mosaic.

ware and get it up and running. And, remember, you have to install all of this stuff only once.

Installing AMosaic

I've broken down the installation requirements and procedures into three categories: hardware, Internet service-provider account, and software.

Hardware Requirements

You can use any Amiga model having a serial port, but you need Workbench 2.1 or later to run AMosaic, and WB 3.0 or 3.1 are preferable. While AMosaic *will* work in a limited fashion in 2.1, its developers have ►

Hot Web Sites

AFTER A FEW months of cruising the World Wide Web with AMosaic, I've built up quite a hotlist of places I've visited. Here are a few of my favorites. (Don't be put off by the strange-looking net addresses; this will all make sense when you get AMosaic up and running.)

http://www.biotech.washington.edu/cgi-bin/WebQuery

The Web Crawler lets you search the Web for any subject you're after.

http://www.unihamburg.de/World/Playground/aminet/aminet_homepage.htmi

Aminet gateway page for tons of Amiga software.



Visit San Francisco's interactive science museum, the Exploratorium, on the Web with AMosaic.

http://wings.buffalo.edu/contest/awards/index.html

"Best of the Web" award-winning page links.

http://www.cs.cmu.edu:8001/afs/cs.cmu.edu/user/bsy/www/iam.html

Here you can find many interesting devices (like the fish-tank cam mentioned earlier)

http://bvp.wdp.com/BVPM/PressRoom/PressRoom.html

Full press kits with photos for the latest Disney films.

http://www.cs.cmu.edu:8001/Web/People/mjw/Computer/Amiga/MainPage.html

The main Amiga information page.

http://www.oac.uci.edu/indiv/dkrause/fun/disney/parks/disneyland/index.html

All about Disneyland, including park maps and visiting tips.

http://akebono.stanford.edu/yahoo/Entertainment/COOL_links/

The coolest stuff on the Web, including The Cool Site of the Day.

http://www.exploratorium.edu/

That great interactive science museum in San Francisco.

http://kawika.hcc.hawaii.edu/iss101/iss101.html

An excellent interactive Internet tutorial for novices.

http://mistral.enst.fr/~pioch/louvre/louvre.shtml

Tour the Louvre in Paris!

http://www.msstate.edu/Movies/

An incredible searchable database of movie facts and reviews.

http://www.ludd.luth.se:80/~pjotr/

Swede Peter Sjostrom's Home Page with fun Amiga stuff and lots of pictures of famous Amigoids.

http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/jplnews.html

The latest space stuff from the Jet Propulsion Lab, including many incredible photographs.

http://www.scubed.com:8001/caltrans/transnet.html

Real-time freeway traffic reports that get data from sensors imbedded in the roadways!

http://nearnet.gnn.com/wic/newrescat.toc.html

The Whole Internet Catalog, so vast it's impossible to describe.

http://metaverse.com/

Adam (Ex-MTV) Curry's site packed with rock culture and music.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/

The new White House site, gorgeous graphics here. Your tax dollars at work.

http://pubweb.parc.xerox.com/map/

Give it a USA location, and it draws a zoomable detailed map on your screen. □

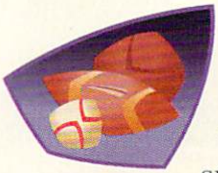
—HL

stated that future versions will require at least Workbench 3.0.

Due to Mosaic's graphics-intensive nature, it helps to have a 2MB Agnus, and thus 2MB of chip RAM, but you can probably get by with 1MB if that's all you have. You should also have 2MB of fast RAM, and a hard drive is a must. Installing all the required bits and pieces will consume a little more than 3MB of disk space.

Service Provider

As far as access is concerned, you must have either a shell account or a full SLIP (Serial Line Internet Protocol) account with an Internet service provider. Sorry about that, you CompuServe, GEnie, Delphi, and BIX subscribers, but you'll have to link up elsewhere to use AMosaic.



You can employ AMosaic without a SLIP account by using The Internet Adaptor (TIA), a Unix program distributed by a company on the net called marketplace.com. Using a File Transfer Protocol (FTP), you obtain this program, install it in your shell account, and it tricks the AmiTCP software (the networking package that puts your Amiga on the Internet) into thinking you have a SLIP account. TIA works well for me (in my Portal shell account) in linking up with AMosaic.

To find out how to get TIA, send an empty e-mail letter to: tia-info@marketplace.com, and within five minutes you'll get an automatic reply with all the information you need.

TIA is the only software described here that's commercial—you get a free 14-day trial, then pay a one-time $25 personal license fee to keep using it. It's also the only piece of software you need that does *not* get downloaded to your Amiga.

Amiga Software

You can find all the files named below in the Amiga Zone on Portal, or on Aminet, the world-wide network of Amiga-supporting FTP sites (and probably plenty of other places as well). I'll include the Portal "go numbers" for reference.

1) First, you need the AMosaic software itself. There are four flavors of it, but I'm going to list only two of them (the other two require either DNET or Commodore's AS225R networking package, and I'm assuming you have neither one of those). The first of these two is:

4842.3.13.687 MOSAIC1.2AMITCP.LHA

This Mosaic works with AmiTCP, and you need it to actually get Mosaic working for you live and online. (After you are online, visit the AMosaic Home Page on the Web and download the newer version, 1.2.1, which has improvements and bug fixes.) The other one is:

4842.3.13.689 MOSAIC1.2NONET.LHA

This is a "no-net" version of AMosaic. It does not require a network connection (so it won't really do anything useful), but it allows you to see what the software is like, and it comes with some practice files as well as documentation.

2) Next, get AmiTCP. You'll need at least version 3.0B2:

4842.3.13.760 AMITCP-30B2.LHA

or, preferably, the newer 4.0:

4842.3.13.862 AMITCP-DEMO-40.LHA



which has a much better installation routine. A fully functioning demo version of 4.0 is downloadable, and by paying the fee for it you'll get a version without the startup-delay message.

(It's useful to know that AmiTCP can be used for many other networking tasks besides AMosaic. For instance, there are FTP "daemons" that let you log into an FTP site and get files from it directly to your Amiga's hard drive. There's also a wonderful IRC chatting client for AmiTCP called "Grapevine," by Brian J. Cerveny. The beauty of an AmiTCP-networked connection is that you can literally run AMosaic and these other clients at the same time over one connection!)

3) AMosaic's interface is driven by Stefan Stuntz's Magical User Interface (MUI) library and associated files, so you'll have to download:

4842.3.7.436 MUI22USR.LHA

By the way, AMosaic runs a lot more smoothly if you use MUI prefs to put it on its own custom screen, rather than running it on the Workbench.

4) AMosaic can maintain a hotlist of all your favorite WWW sites. Because the Web is so vast, you will want to take note of places you've enjoyed visiting so you can return to them quickly at a later time. If you don't want to end up with slips of paper or sticky notes all over your desk, you'll want to get AMHotList by downloading:



4842.3.13.684 AMHOTLISTV1.50.LHA

Again, you'll do well to use MUI prefs to run AMHotList on AMosaic's screen.

So that's it. With the four Amiga software packages (AMosaic, AmiTCP, MUI, and AMHotList) and either a true SLIP account or TIA and a shell account, you're ready to surf the net in style.

You're bound to run into some problems getting all of these things installed and working for you, but the good thing is that many other people have already been there, done that. There's a lot of help available on Usenet in comp.sys.amiga.networking and comp.sys.amiga.datacomm. There are also a couple of excellent user-written AmigaGuide files to help you put it all together. They are on Aminet or Portal or are available from cliffg@cup.portal.com and rcr@netcom.com through the Internet.

The Future

Even though AMosaic is only a year old, it has already fallen a bit behind other platforms' Web browsers in the feature-wars department. The AMosaic team is already working on its second-generation Amiga browser, which will probably be a commercial product with its advanced features ported back to the free AMosaic. ■

Harv Laser is moderator/sysop for the Amiga Zone on the Portal network.



PLAYING IN THE KEY OF A

MUSIC IS AS diverse and varied as the musicians who create it. And so it is with the five musicians *AW* interviewed for this piece. Each brings variations of experience to the table, but all agree on one thing: The Amiga is a helpmate none of them would willingly do without when it comes to making the music they love.

Louis Gentile

WHEN YOU THINK of music involving computers, styles like New Age or maybe rock most often come to mind. Yet, of all the many musicians who use the Amiga in their work, Louis Gentile may very well be the only opera singer.

Ever since he was 13 years old, Gentile has made his living as a singer. In the 1970s, popular music and rock were steady fare for Gentile's Connecticut-based band, Liquid Sunshine. The pop-music business, though, can be fickle, Gentile explained, so when someone complimented him on his voice and suggested he should study classical music, he did.

A move to Zurich in 1982 to study classical voice eventually led him to a new career, home, and wife. He accepted a position to sing with an opera house in Zurich, where he met his wife, Lucie Lanoue, also a singer. Gentile's singing career soon began to pick up, and he started to perform with some of the "bigger singers" (he has sung with Pavarotti).



Louis Gentile—from opera to operating systems.

He encountered his first Amiga—an A2000—in a German computer store. "I picked it up right away," he said. "I really had no previous experience with computers." Shortly after becoming an Amigaphile, a friend recommended Bars&Pipes (The Blue Ribbon SoundWorks), and he acquired that, as well. Both matches were successful, and Gentile has come to depend on Bars&Pipes and his Amiga, now an A4000.

As his career as an opera singer takes him fairly far afield—he's often on the road with his company to France, Italy, and Scandinavia—he doesn't have as much time as he would like to sit down at the computer to experiment and "play."

Digital Music Coach

That doesn't stop him, though, when eventually he gets back to home base and, with his wife, begins to prepare for new roles. "I'm sort of a toy freak," Gentile says about his admiration for the Amgia. "But even better, once we had a chance to use it, it's the best and fastest tool for us . . . the computer is a major tool. My wife Lucie is a better pianist than I . . . she puts all the parts, track by track, into Bars&Pipes, and I can then add some finesse to the music . . . I can use the Amiga to rehearse a new part. If I get a call to play a new part, [Bars&Pipes] turns my Amiga into a full-time coach—it's very convenient!"

Bars&Pipes has transformed Gentile into, as he puts it, "a one-man band." And never having to worry about the other members of the band, says Gentile, is "therapeutic . . . I've always had trouble with drummers!"

Gentile has written music for a CD he produced with his Amiga, as well as a musical score for *22 Kilometers Gegen Rechts,* a film critical of the skinhead movement. (In English, the film title translates as "22 kilometers to the right.") The CD, entitled *The Operatic Experience*, is an unusual mixture of opera and pop (including one cut called "Never Could Throw Away My Guitar"). In it, Gentile takes a caustic view of the internal politics that drive the opera industry.

But you needn't be privy to the goings-on in the tight-knit world of opera to appreciate Gentile's sarcastic wit. *The Operatic Experience* is also dedicated " . . . to all people, in all lines of work, who suffer from the incompetence and indifference of bureaucratic politics when trying to stage their own daily opera." Hmmm . . . that could cover a whole lot of us.

AW PROFILES OF FIVE AMIGA MUSICIANS

By Jan Jackson



John McFee—Doobie Brother meets Amiga.

JOHN MCFEE

JOHN MCFEE HAS played with some of the more high-profile bands in the history of rock. He is a member of the Doobie Brothers and has also played with the likes of Van Morrison, the Grateful Dead, Steve Miller, Elvis Costello, Boz Scaggs, and Huey Lewis and the News. What would inspire him to dabble with the Amiga for sound production?

McFee first became acquainted with the Amiga when shopping for a system for his son in 1989. "We looked at Macs and PCs," says McFee, "but once we saw the Amiga, we said forget those other ones!" Again, because of his son's interest, he began to learn it and found it comfortable and logical to use.

Like Louis Gentile, McFee is a Bars&Pipes fan, having picked up a copy of version 1.0 when it first came out. He has followed the product as it evolved, upgrading to Bars&Pipes Professional. "I like it," he says, "[because] it takes a different approach." In fact, when reached at his Santa Barbara home for this telephone interview, he was using the program to rehearse for a benefit concert to be held that weekend: "I haven't played some of these [Steve Miller] songs in a while so I programmed Bars&Pipes so I can practice."

McFee's musical Amiga is also outfitted with SunRize Industries' AD516 high-fidelity audio card and Studio-16 editing system, a setup that bolsters his traditional 24-track analog professional system. Using the Amiga in conjunction with his conventional studio gear "has really expanded the possibilities," he explains.

IN THE LAND OF THE RIZING SUN

How he came across the SunRize system is an interesting tale. When touring in Japan with Guy Allison (whose credits include work with The Moody Blues, Air Supply, Boz Scaggs, and Don Henley among others) and Stuart Cook (Credence Clearwater Revival—see the next section for more on Cook), McFee was reading *AmigaWorld* and noticed the SunRize ad for Studio16. Allison had been discussing his thoughts about purchasing a Macintosh system with ProTools. It was going to cost about $14,000 for a system equivalent to an Amiga with the AD516/Studio16 installed. McFee showed him the advertisement, and the two began faxing SunRize from Tokyo with inquiries about specifications. Before returning to the States, both McFee and Allison had placed orders for the sound system—with Allison opting for an A3000T, as well.

"When I first got it [AD516/Studio16], I was a little hesitant to use it," says McFee. But later on, while he was finishing up a mix for a new Peter Lewis recording, he realized that what the project needed was a little acoustic guitar to really make it work. The problem was that he was only four days away from a Doobie Brothers tour and had already used all 24 tracks of his analog equipment. "I remembered the AD516 and tried it." He was able to add another eight tracks for a 32-track system. Needless to say, McFee was very pleased.

When asked if he ever considered using the Amiga and an AD516/Studio16 in place of his conventional equipment, he paused a moment and said, " . . . the more I use it, it might be possible. Because of its nonlinear aspects, it offers a lot more flexibility than traditional [methods]." We'll be checking the liner notes of his next CD/tape to see how things develop.

STUART COOK

AN AMIGA OWNER since 1991, songwriter/musician Stu Cook is probably one of the system's most most ardent supporters. "It's actually the most economic and powerful computer ever made because of the compactness of the operating system," says Cook. "The architecture is so well thought out. My wife has a PC clone . . . it's a nightmare to use!"

Even as events at Commodore took a turn for the worse during recent weeks, Cook redoubled his enthusiasm for the machine: "The Amiga was determined to be the orphan of the PC world . . . but I'm not selling mine . . . I hope that something good will finally happen to the Amiga now that Commodore is out of the picture."

A true democrat when it comes to finding uses for his Amiga, Cook employs his machine to run the full gamut of applications: database, word processing, 3-D graphics and rendering, virtual reality, scenery animation, and, of course, music.

Cook has a "small project studio" in his Calabasas, California, home where his A3000T is integrated with some high-caliber professional sound-production equipment. Among various projects, he develops and produces song demos. (According to a reliable source who shall remain nameless, Cook has ►

enough gold records to wallpaper a barn.)

Also, he says, "I'm just about to get involved in my son's film project. Jesse is studying film production at Montana University . . . he has a very large documentary. We're going to be using the AD516 to handle all the dialog and the video queues."

Cook uses Blue Ribbon's Bars&Pipes Pro in conjunction with SunRize's AD516—a combination he favors because of the ease of integration between them. "It's nice to see two unrelated companies work together the way they have. It's really been successful." Coming from a man who has engaged in some successful collaborations himself, that's high praise indeed.

Cassandra Gaston

"I'VE ALWAYS LOVED animation and sound effects," begins Cassandra Gaston, a budding Los Angeles videographer/filmmaker with an ear for quality sound production. "I bought an Amiga two years ago. I had no idea how it worked, but I went ahead and bought it. Two months later I bought a Video Toaster (NewTek). I'm learning as I go."

Last December, Gaston spent some time in a classroom at a cable station to learn about acceptable formats and how to put together programs for area viewing: "I'd wanted to put together some little talk shows for airing on cable stations, but first I needed to learn how to put my videos into a format that cable stations can use."

Understanding the importance of sound quality, she aquired an AD516/Studio 16 combo from SunRize and Blue Ribbon's Bars&Pipes. Without a lot of experience with music software, she decided also to buy Blue Ribbon's SuperJam and a SMPTE output module. "Everything is all so easy to use," she explains. "Friends come over and they can't believe that I've hooked up all this equipment!"

Gaston began making videos for business advertisements, using SuperJam to produce the music and then striping the tape. In some respects, however, her interest in video and film production is different from that of many of her peers—she really loves the technology and finds it intriguing and intellectually stimulating.



Cassandra Gaston—making a difference with her Amiga.

Cassandra also has other pursuits and priorities she feels are even more important: She works as a registered nurse in a newborn unit in a local hospital. In a more serious tone she explains, "I'm not in this to make money. Living here in South Central Los Angeles, it sometimes feels like we're experiencing a plague . . . the media has had such a negative influence on people." Her hope is to reach people by access to cable, producing something of substance to educate and uplift in a way that will get people's attention. "Sometimes it just takes one person to do something positive."

Kelly Craven

KELLY CRAVEN HAS had his A2000 so long he has a hard time remembering when he bought it: "I think I paid about $1700 for it . . . maybe six years ago?"

Craven, drummer in a studio band called Abandon Reason, is into a little bit of everything: He repairs keyboards and guitars and dabbles a bit in a small recording studio in his home just outside of Atlanta, Georgia. As a digital musician, he cut his teeth on a program called Master Tracks for the Commodore 64. Choosing his Amiga was an effortless decision, he explains, "because when I went to the computer store [to upgrade his system], I was able to see the Amiga, the Atari, and the Macintosh running side by side . . . the Amiga outperformed them all, simply because of the multitasking capability of the machine.

Looking for new software, soon Craven also found himself dealing with the folks at Blue Ribbon. "I originally downloaded a demo of Bars&Pipes from PeopleLink and immediately liked it because of its editing functions." The proximity of Craven's home to Atlanta-based Blue Ribbon SoundWorks eventually brought them closer together. Now an avid Bars&Pipes aficionado, Craven had already been dabbling in Basic when he first saw Blue Ribbon's Rules for Tools package. He eventually learned to program in C from using it and has since programmed between 30 to 40 tools. "I programmed what was useful to me as a drummer," he explains, "the way a drummer would play them."

As far as recording projects involving the Amiga, Craven had this to say: "As we're not a performing band, we've played probably only 10 times together as a group, and we recorded all original music." Craven and Abandon Reason recorded a CD at his house called *Dreams in Black & White*. "We did all the drums and controlled all the effects with Bars&Pipes."

What's amazing about this project, he explains, is that "we used all this computer synchronization, but you would never be able to tell [that] the computer's influence is underneath the music." That's the kind of thing that probably only a drummer could really understand and appreciate. ■

*Jan Jackson, a former editor at **AmigaWorld**, now works as a technical writer for a banking organization in Connecticut. Besides missing the New Hampshire countryside, she also laments that she can't convince her new employers to bring in Amigas to replace all those PC clones. ("I guess they have no music in their hearts," she concludes.) Write to her c/o **AmigaWorld**, Editorial Dept., 80 Elm St., PO Box 802, Peterborough, NH 03458-0802.*

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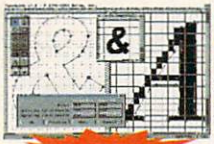
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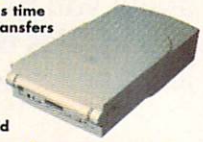


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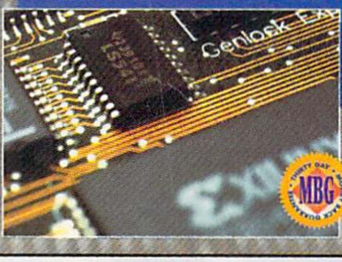
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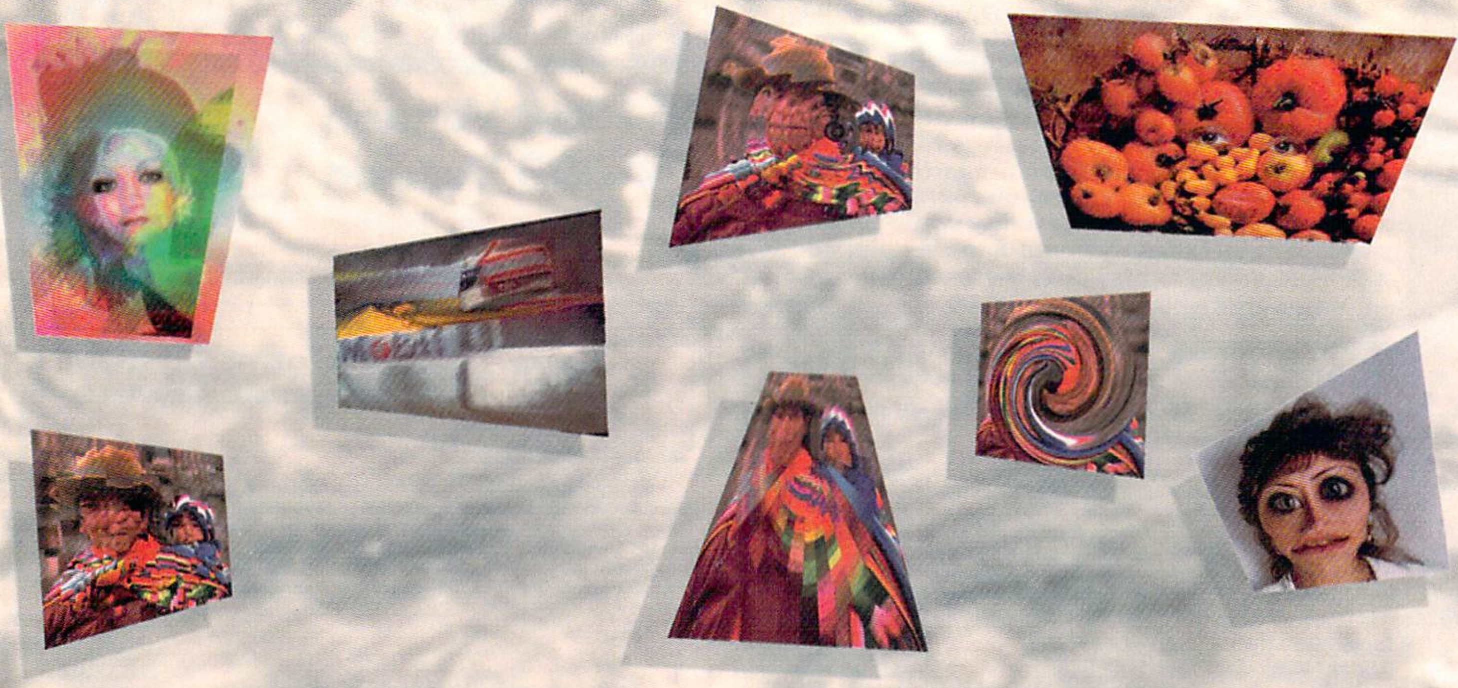
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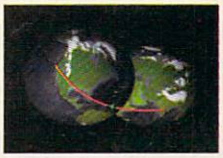
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ACCENT ON GRAPHICS

Digital Time-Lapse Effects

73

A continuing series of tips, techniques, and tricks for creating more imaginative Amiga graphics.

By Joel Hagen

IN THE FIELD of cinematography, the special-effects technique known as "time lapse" has a long history among professionals, researchers, and hobbyists. The goal of time-lapse photography is to reveal something about a phenomenon or process that is difficult to perceive in the normal flow of time. Time-lapse photography clarifies such processes by altering the apparent flow of time until the dynamics occur at a rate we can perceive. You can watch a flower bloom in seconds rather than hours. You can watch a snowman melt, a spiderweb grow, or a culture spread on a petri dish.

Time-lapse effects are particularly well suited to experiments on the desktop computer. And recent hardware and software developments on the Amiga make it easier than ever to experiment with this fascinating technique.

Instant Gratification

Unlike normal motion-picture filming in which one frame is shot every 24th of a second (or every 30th of a second for video), the time-lapse effect involves lengthening the interval between shooting successive frames to several seconds, minutes, or even hours. The result, when these frames are viewed at 24 or 30 frames per second, is an illusion of accelerated time. Time-lapse photography is frequently done with a movie camera. The necessity of mailing off film for developing, however, involves continual expense and a frustrating wait to see results. It is anything but a spontaneous process. With the Amiga and a video camera, you can view the results of a time-lapse experiment moments after you complete it.

For your first project, you might want to capture the movement of clouds in the sky as seen in the accompanying illustration. You will need some way of taking pictures and inputting them into the Amiga. I use a Sony Hi-8 camcorder and a GVP IV24 framegrabber. Your equipment, however, can be as minimal as a disposable camera and access to a scanner.

The plan is simple. Find something interesting that happens very slowly, point a rigidly mounted camera at it, take pictures at regular intervals, and play them back as an animation to see more clearly what was going on. At a basic level you can manually capture a frame at regular intervals, save it to disk, and later compress the frames into an animation. Even if you have an old Digi-View setup, this method works fine if you have the time to man the equipment. Digi-View's slow scan is no problem for the rate of change involved in most time-lapse projects. You can often simply let the length of time it takes to grab and save a frame serve as the interval between shots. If you keep working at a steady pace, your intervals will be regular enough for most purposes. For longer intervals, pace yourself with a digital clock or timer. Estimate the length of time you will be recording a phenomenon; then, based on the desired number of frames in your finished animation, you can calculate the appropriate interval between shots.

If you have a framegrabber that does real-time captures of video images, use it in conjunction with image-processing software to automate the time-lapse process. ImageFX (Nova Designs), for example, provides excellent control over the IV24. You can use the ARexx button in the ImageFX Toolbox to select any of several included ARexx programs, such as TimeLapse.ifx, written by Thomas Krehbiel. This program grabs frames at regular intervals, renders them in an Amiga format, and appends the result in an ANIM file.

If you have an AGA machine, HAM8 is an excellent render mode. To create a time-lapse cloud animation like the illustrated sequence, just cable your video camera to the IV24 input, point the camera at the sky, and launch the ARexx program. You are prompted to specify an interval in seconds and an output filename. The program runs until you hit Ctrl-c to abort. Be sure to

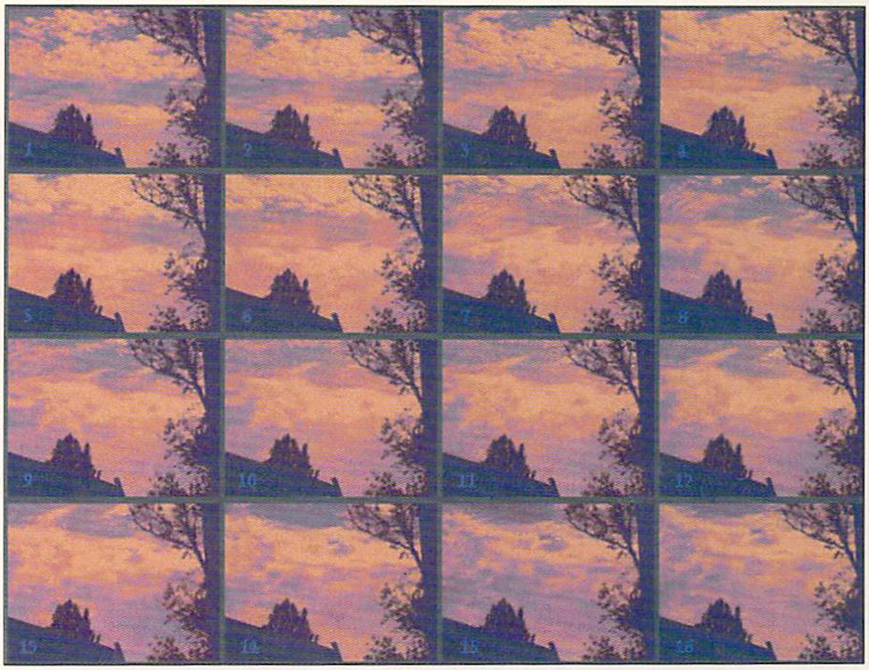
The principles of time-lapse photography can be adapted easily to your Amiga to develop interesting animation and image-processing techniques.

select the framegrabber in Prefs/Scanner before running the ARexx program. By specifying the number of seconds when prompted, you can have any interval up to 277 hours between frames. In the illustration, 10 seconds was used. Combined with render and save times, the total interval was a little less than one minute, which gives dramatic motion to the clouds in the final animation. Experiment to achieve the interval you require.

AREXX VARIATIONS

If you are familiar with ARexx programming, you can write utilities to suit your specific needs and add them to the ImageFX Rexx directory. Alternatively, you might try customizing existing ARexx programs. For example, you could modify the TimeLapse.ifx program to create a 30-frame animation, then stop. In a text editor, locate the DO FOREVER line and change it to read:

```
DO i=1 to 30
```



This time-lapse sequence of moving clouds was automatically captured using ImageFX, the GVP IV24 framegrabber, and an ARexx script.

Another variation you might try on the same program saves a series of 24-bit images numbered incrementally. In your text editor delete the entire block of the program identified with the Render module and the GETRENDER command. Delete the LockRange 0 ON line just to be tidy. Locate the DO FOREVER loop at the end of the program and substitute

```
DO i=1 to 30
Scanner Grab
SaveBufferAs ILBM '"'output||i'"'
IF lapse ~= 0 THEN ADDRESS COMMAND
  'c:Wait' lapse
END
```

When launched with a video source, the program will save a series of 24-bit images with the filename you provide and, in this case, numbers 1–30 appended. You can add other ARexx commands to perform sharpening, edge detection, or other image-processing operations before saving. This suggests powerful research applications.

If it is inconvenient to cable a camera directly to the Amiga, videotape a sequence with your camcorder on a stable tripod and then grab frames later. This gives you freedom to record events in remote locations. If the phenomenon you are recording occurs within the time frame of the battery charge, you can simply let the camera run uninterrupted. For phenomena with slower dynamics or longer duration, shoot 10 or 20 seconds of tape at appropriate intervals. Separate each shot with a few seconds of black, or better yet with a few seconds of a card on which you have written the sequential number of the frame. For tape input shot this way, you may find it difficult to reliably automate frame capture. Your best choice may be manual playback and capture.

If you are shooting indoors, keep the lighting consistent. If you are shooting outdoors, you may need to disable automatic exposure for best results. Always use a stable tripod. If you have no video input for your Amiga but have access to a scanner, use any camera on a stable mount and shoot a series of prints. When you scan them, be careful about consistent registration. Your time-lapse sequences can be composited into other scenes for interesting effects, used for serious research purposes, or perhaps just viewed to satisfy your curiosity about phenomena that occur in different perceptual time frames. ■

Joel Hagen's credits include work in art, astronomy, science fiction, and software development. Write to him at 10512 Sawyer, Oakdale, CA 95361. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for a reply.

The Game Preserve

By Peter Olafson, AW Games Editor

Special Report: Wargames

Rumors of the death of the Amiga wargame are greatly exaggerated. In the last few months, we have seen some remarkable advances in the state-of-the-strategy-art. Charge . . . and charge it. (Grin).

UFO: Enemy Unknown *(MicroProse UK)*

Once upon a time, there were a pair of nice Amiga games called Laser Squad and Lords of Power, and they lived happily in a land called Breach. The games were a delightful step up from their models, but, small, mission-based, and editor-free, couldn't live happily ever after. The End.

Or not. UFO, designed by Laser Squad's creators, takes that concept and makes a campaign out of it. No, I take that back: It makes it a whole world. Our world, in fact. Every paranoid nightmare has come true in MicroProse UK's conversion of X-Comm for AGA machines. The aliens are landing, they're none too friendly, and your small team, equipped with a pair of interceptors and landing craft, is all that stands in their way.

Your first task is to shoot down a UFO and take over the crash site. Not a small task. You end up in an angled-down tactical scenario in the fashion of games like Sabre Team and Breach, but with beautiful scenery, a velvet cloak of atmosphere, a bunch of very on-the-ball aliens waiting out there in the darkness, and some great features (like multiple altitudes) to keep you primed.

And from here, the game really begins to blossom—into scavenging for alien artifacts, research, and maintenance of your bases and larger strategic considerations. I don't have any complaints about this loving conversion that can't be accounted for by my own ineptitude, and I don't share the one I've heard about the game's speed. For the dedicated strategy gamer, UFO is the shortest path to heaven. (A).

Lords of the Realm *(Impressions)*

Defender of the Crown's concept has been improvised and expanded upon many times, but some element always gets left out of the mix. Lords is the first to have it all: elaborate combat, castle design and construction, resource management (including crop rotation), diplomacy, trade, work assignments—and all handled very accessibly. Designers David Lester and Chris Foster have outdone themselves. This is *easily* the best game of its type on any platform. The only thing it lacks is a real advisor. (The end-of-year reports are a bit thin.) (A).

Mongol Commander *(RAW Entertainment)*

The level of ambition is impressive. By far the largest pure wargame ever attempted on the Amiga (almost 11.6 megabytes when decompressed onto hard disk), this simulation of Genghis Khan's campaigns in the period 1206-1259 aims high. The full version, with a tactical display, requires a hard disk, '030 processor, and 3MB of RAM. (A "Junior" version that runs from floppy and in 1 meg omits the tactical displays.)



It's a war of the worlds in MicroProse UK's UFO.

Then again, big does not necessarily mean good, and MC needs refinements to become truly playable. The almost constant redrawing of the handsome unit graphics on the tactical screens is irritating to the eye and awkward for gameplay. The game needs a proper manual, with fewer mathematical formulas and more "getting started" tutorials and advice. It needs hotkey access to commands, and a way to switch immediately to any commander. (The pure mouse interface sounds good until you've had to cycle through it a few times in search of a command.) The map needs a zoom function to bring the player in closer touch with the game world. While the atmospheric sound effects—thunder, wind, gurgling water—do draw you in, the small-print text messages and the commander markers feel too removed. It's like playing from orbit. (D+).

Fields of Glory *(MicroProse UK)*

This is rather like playing with animated toy soldiers, and there's both good and bad in that. MicroProse UK wisely hasn't made this re-creation of Napolean's 1815 campaign too complicated. You pick the soldiers, tell them what to do and who to do it to (and in what formation), and they go off and do it. You can zoom in and watch the cannons belch smoke and the corpses pile up. And it's fun. For awhile.

Continued on p. 46.

A—Wow! Exquisite. A must for your games library.
B—Great fun. Plenty of entertainment value here.
C—Meets expectations. Good, solid performer.
D—Disappointing. Lots of room for improvement.
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From p. 42.
However, the game's basic simplicity may ultimately be its undoing. FOG is too narrow in scope (just six battles) and the thrill of battle isn't what it could be—in part, I think, owing to the absence of a hidden-movement feature. You see all the opposing armies at all times. Where's the fun in that? (C+/B-).

THE BLUE & THE GRAY AND D-DAY *(IMPRESSIONS)*

Designer Ed Grabowski has finally thrown over the out-dated engine he's used in each of Impressions' tactical wargames since Rorke's Rift, and created a strategic one for these Civil War and Western Front campaigns. They're about as detailed as you could want, yet comparatively easy to play; having a closeup view of the battlefield onscreen helps enormously.

However, wargames should be exciting, and in the tactical mode (which hasn't really changed) these are still kinda dull and laborious. (And could we have a few more manuals, please? D-Day's got four, plus reference cards.) (C+).

CAMPAIGN II *(EMPIRE)*

Campaign was a scarecrow of a tank game; the strategic version of Conqueror walked the walk and talked the talk, but it didn't have much of a brain and was a little too ambitious for its own good—always a deadly combo.

Campaign II expands the concept (the six scenarios run up to the Gulf War), teaches the brain some tricks, and in the process comes significantly closer to the ultimate strategic/tactical tank game. It's still a bit overwhelming, but you'll get the hang of it. You'll love viewing the battles from a helicopter! (B).

RISE OF THE WEST *(RAW ENTERTAINMENT)*

Man oh man! Here's what happens when a designer says, "What would Risk or Diplomacy be like with . . ." and acts on it. Rise is a nicely detailed 8-player hybrid of those two classics that relies on administration as well as warring over a wealth of scenarios (and the ability to build your own). Elements of government, trade, and taxation are covered, and you'll even find other states launching their own campaigns.

The only drawback is that the controls aren't intuitive; you can't just boot and shoot. (This is definitely a take-the-manual-into-the- bathroom game.) But if you're looking for something a little more lasting, this may be just the ticket. (B+).

ARMOUR-GEDDON II *(PSYGNOSIS)*

This multiplatform simulation-cum-wargame started out a couple of years back as an upgrade to the original AG, and turned into a full game. It maintains the original theme—hopping between various polygonal craft (and developing new ones) while doing battle on a large, desert-ish map—this time in an effort to launch a space probe and destroy a satellite.

The funny thing is, it's still basically an upgrade; the details may be different, but the core game hasn't changed that significantly. The improvements are welcome, though. The missions give a sense of structure. (In AG, it often felt as though you were playing in free-form.) The lively environment—smoke in the air, wreckage on the ground—allows you to feel you're not alone. And it installs onto hard disk, where it loses AG's troublesome sense of fragility. This is Armour-Geddon done to a "T." Now, how about the real Armour-Geddon II? (B+).

BRAVO ROMEO DELTA *(RAW ENTERTAINMENT)*

A worthwhile reprise of the game Free Spirit brought out in '93. Don't expect major changes; Texas publisher RAW has updated this graphically spartan but information-rich World War II game (from the developer of Mongol Commander) with only minor bug fixes and AI tweaks. Unfortunately, it also adds a logistical goof: The substitution of the Commonwealth of Independent States for the USSR. Come now; I'd rather play an outdated game than an implausible one. (B-).

BATTLE FIELD CREATOR *(SOFTWARE SOCIETY)*

It looks as though we won't be seeing Battle Isle II, but Germany's Software Society has made sure we'll get the most out of the original game, the BI data disk, and Battle Isle '93. Battle Field Creator is a fine tool for creating your own scenarios or editing the ones supplied with the game. Prepared in cooperation with BI publisher Blue Byte, it allows you to build maps via a point-and-click interface similar to BI's.

But there's this one thing. The manual, and a fair amount of the in-program text, is in German. (The publisher is prepared to release an English-language version, but doesn't have a distributor here yet.) If you know the game system well, and don't mind a challenge, it's not as big a problem as you might think. (Like BI itself, the editor is largely intuitive.) If you don't . . . well, hang in there for a bit. Version 2.0 will support the History Line 1914–18 extension. (A-, provided you know German).

OPERATION COMBAT II: BY LAND, SEA AND AIR *(MERIT)*

Outwardly, this latest offering in a long line of chess-like wargames from Scott Lamb isn't all that different from its predecessors: just new maps, new craft (the gunboats can go under bridges!) and new computer AI. The computer's a decent opponent, too, but the real pleasure here is playing someone else via modem—a feature that frequently isn't an option in Amiga games. A pleasant way to spend an hour or two. (B).

KINGMAKER *(US GOLD)*

I've read a lot of middling to bad reviews of this re-creation of the War of the Roses, but Kingmaker still managed to rub me the right way. Its only real plagues or portents are a general graphical ugliness, the absence of sound, and a few glitches in the interface. I liked most the wealth of online information sensibly presented, the detailed, sun-struck battles, the game's personality-based roots, and a sense of luminous intelligence at its heart. There's something here, to be sure. (B-).

SPECIAL REPORT: SOCCER GAMES

And baseball fans think they have it rough. One of the grim facts of a Eurocentric Amiga game market is that we've effectively had to endure a three-year computer baseball strike. (For the record, the last Amiga baseball game was Domark/Tengen's horrifying RBI Baseball 2 in '92.)

Hey, these days, we're lucky if we can play computer *golf* that doesn't involve a bunch of guys named Ian and Nigel. Everything's soccer. Little men in short pants knocking spotty white balls into nets with their heads, and keeping stats on it. Soccer and soccer management games seem to surface every other week in the UK, where I hear they have a church for soccer worship. And the killer is that fully half of 'em look like Sensible Soccer—the tiny-player legend (affectionally known to the Brits as Sensi) that took this cottage industry by storm in '92 and never let go. Here's a guide to the current crop that should keep you from getting trapped in the wrong nets:

SIERRA SOCCER *(SIERRA)*

Significant partly as the second tangible representation of Sierra's renewed interest in the Amiga, and in part as the first game in ages to give Sensible a run for its money . . . by looking a whole lot like Sensible. Why is having players the size of *lemmings* such a big deal? Or is that just it? (B+). ►

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MANCHESTER UNITED: PREMIER LEAGUE CHAMPIONS *(KRISALIS)*

It's vibrant, easy to understand, up to date (a '94–'95 data disk), and it's a frontrunner in the I Can Make Smaller Soccer Players Than You Can, N'yah-N'yah! sweepstakes. But there's this thing about tiny soccer players: You can't always tell what they're doing, and that makes them tricky to control. (B).

KICK OFF 3 *(ANCO)*

Dino Dini, widely celebrated as the author of the KO and KO2; and Anco, widely celebrated as their publisher, come to a parting of the ways. Dini does the very Kick Off-ish Goal! for Virgin. Great game. Anco publishes the un-Kick Off-ish Kick Off 3 by Steve Screech. Also a great game: Very atmospheric, with lovely sideview graphics and excellent controls. And one snag: Mr. Screech does not appear to be familiar with the '030 processor. His game does not cooperate with it. I have to haul my G-Force accelerator out of its warm little home to run KO3. Do you want to know what frame of mind that puts me in? (B+).

ON THE BALL: WORLD CUP EDITION *(ASCON)*

The Patrician meets Premier Manager 3, with results that should fascinate any sports fan. Thank goodness someone remembered that sports isn't all stats and action. There's media, attitude, scandal and a whole lot more, and OTB touches on it all in direct, yet gentle fashion that's almost adventure-like. It's still a management game, of course, and a superior one, but set in a sometimes distressingly real world, and that gives it top marks. League version in the works. (A).

EMPIRE SOCCER '94 *(EMPIRE)*

Stranger than arcade developer Graftgold (Fire & Ice, Uridium 2) doing a soccer game is the result: Absolutely the best-looking soccer game of the year. The players are these sharp, brawny guys who look like they escaped from an arcade-adventure, and when they move along the edge of the field, overhanging steel beams from the stadium move above them in parallax. It doesn't have the best flow, and I'm not sure what the developer had in mind with all the cartoony caricatures. But you've probably never seen anything like it. (B).

PREMIER MANAGER 3 *(GREMLIN INTERACTIVE)*

This is an amazing bit of coding. If it was for baseball, you'd have people buying Amigas just to play it. OK, it's for soccer—and only British soccer at that—but PM3 is the sort of program that could make you get into the kicky sport. In your role as GM, you have responsibility for (and detailed access to) everything from sponsor advertising to player insurance to putting in new parking and floodlights—all via a polished icon interface. Who would have thought charts could look so good? (A).

THE SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER *(RENEGADE)*

Sensi's still thriving. Renegade has updated it with a '93–'94 edition, a World Champions version, and, just before Christmas, this new management game. It's an interesting alternative to PM3 in that it's far wider than it is deep, with more than 1500 teams and 26,000 real-life players from around the globe—and that it lets you play as well as direct.

Indeed, playing still seems to be the point; the management end barely gets a nod. But it's as charming as ever. (B). ■

To locate vendors of the games reviewed, see the "Manufacturers'/Distributors' Addresses" list on p. 62.

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From p. 10.

Flock, it lets you apply an animated displacement map to each object. When an object reaches the edges of the cube to which it is confined, it reverses direction. I would like to see a control for damping that direction reversal, for the current method is a bit too sudden for something like a bird's flight path.

Wobbler and Wobbles

Finally, there is Wobbler, which is intended to be used with bones to add an element of springiness to objects. An example would be to make the belly of a character bounce naturally as it walked. The parameters for setting up Wobbler are simple and intuitive—unlike the array of physics-based variables hidden behind them. This is perhaps my favorite module and a must for character animators.

Working through the tutorials on these modules is not always painless. There are a few instances where files or objects referenced in the manual are not in the software. Moreover, the manuals for both volumes are somewhat sparse, lack indices, and suffer from quite a few grammatical errors. On the other hand, the utility these modules provide far outweighs their problems and shortcomings. If you're a serious LightWave animator, you'd do well to acquire these tools.

—Mark Thompson

TurboText 2.0

Oxxi Inc., $99.95; $34.95 for owners of other Oxxi products; $20 upgrade from TurboText 1.0

All Amigas.
2.x/3.x compatible.
Hard-drive installable.
Not copy protected.
Accelerator compatible.
***Minimum system*: One floppy drive.**
***Recommended system*: 2MB of RAM, hard drive, printer.**

High-performance Amiga text editor.

TurboText 2.0 is the long-awaited upgrade of one of the Amiga's most powerful text editors. Written by former Commodore software engineer Martin Taillefer, TurboText (TTX) is a system-friendly and extremely configurable editor.

TTX provides many of the text-editing features that Amiga users have come to expect: multiple documents that open at the same time, powerful commands to move within a document and between documents, cut and paste, search and replace, and so on. TTX's default menu, keystroke, scrollbar, and mouse operations are intuitive and adhere to Commodore's user-interface guidelines.

Where TTX shines is in its configurability. Not only can you alter TTX's screen mode, fonts, and colors to suit your needs, but you can totally redefine how TTX operates. You can configure any keystroke, menu item, or mouseclick to run your choice of 160 TTX commands, an ARexx script, or even another program. This feature has boosted TTX's popularity among programmers and power users. Moreover, TTX comes configured to emulate many other popular text editors.

What's New?

By supporting Commodore's Display Database, TTX now opens its windows on the Workbench, any public screen, various custom screens, or third-party graphics-board displays. You can open windows simultaneously on multiple screens, with each window having its own menu and keystroke definitions. In addition, TTX now uses standard file requesters, and all confirmation requesters are clearly worded.

TTX's Find and Change commands now support AmigaDOS-style patterns for searches. Unfortunately, a leftover from TTX 1.03 remains: The Find command misses the first character in the document when searching forward. For example, if the first word of a document is "Boing," and you search for "Boing" from the beginning of the document, TTX overlooks the "B" and won't find the word.

Performance-wise, in tests with a 256K file in the RAM disk, I found that TTX 2.0 loads files twice as fast and saves them 1.5 times as fast as TTX 1.03. ARexx performance has also been boosted, using a cache of macros held in memory. My 450-line ARexx test script executes 30% faster when cached.

TTX's extensive manual now appears in AmigaGuide format and pops up with a press of the Help key. It's well written, cross-referenced, and has a detailed list of the changes made since version 1.03. Speaking of changes, there are far too many for me to describe in this review, but I'll list a few more: new ARexx commands, options, and scripts; several new tooltypes and startup options; built-in mouse blanker; ability to load and save PC and Macintosh files; warnings when you load a file twice; and a greatly expanded Preferences utility. Suffice it to say that this is a major upgrade.

Some Bugs

I had a few minor problems with TTX 2.0. After installation, it refused to run until I rebooted. Also, the Picasso II graphic board's ChangeScreen program has a bug that prevents TTX from changing its screen mode interactively. (Oxxi and VillageTronic are aware of the problem and are working on fixes.)

TTX now keeps its macros in TURBOTEXT:Rexx/ instead of Rexx:, so you may need to modify your TTX 1.03 definition files to provide the full pathnames of your macros. One unfortunate omission is that, because of time constraints, TTX 2.0 does not yet support the promised multiple undo feature.

TTX 2.0 is an excellent product. Easy to use in its most basic configuration, it emulates other editors, and its configurability promises to win many fans. The few problems it has are minor. For twenty bucks, the upgrade is a steal, and even at full price, it's a worthwhile program to own. I recommended it highly.

—Dan Barrett

On the Ball

Oregon Research, $39.95

All Amigas.
2.x/3.x compatible.
Hard-drive installable.
Not copy protected.
Accelerator compatible.
***Minimum system*: AmigaDOS 2.x or later, 1MB.**
***Recommended system*: Hard disk, accelerator, printer.**

Personal information manager.

I try to keep most of my life's schedule in my head, but appointments, vacations, and frequent interruptions sometimes make it tough to remember everything. A personal-information-manager program such as On the Ball (OTB) can make matters easier. Beginning life as a freely distributable shareware package, this latest version (1.30) lets your Amiga assist you to plan your days more efficiently and keep track of pending appointments and schedule changes.

On Schedule

Coming as a single-disk package that includes a 60-page manual, OTB is small by any standards. The program includes an installer, but not the standard Commodore one. Upon completion of the installation process, a calendar appears on the screen with today's date highlighted and the current time at the top. This same calendar then pops up whenever you boot your Amiga.

Using the calendar is straightforward. Double-click a day, and an appointment interface appears. Eight oval buttons on ►

its left side let you add, delete, update, and search the entries. Start- and end-time buttons at the bottom of the interface let you adjust times. When you have an entry set to a specified time, the screen flashes when that time arrives.

The bottom of the interface is where you'll find the major parts of the program: four buttons that control the Appointments, Addressbook, To-Do List, and the Notepad. Selecting the Appointments option lets you type a note in the Note: window, select a time and date, then use the Add button to save the note. Another button at the bottom right of the screen allows you to select how often the appointment will occur, cycling through options such as daily, biweekly, monthly, and so on. For repeated appointments, there's also a button you can select for each day of the week.

Selecting the Addressbook brings up 26 new buttons, one for each letter of the alphabet. In the Name field, you make entries in a first name/last name format, and they're automatically alphabetized by last name as they're added to the data file. An ARexx interface makes adding names and addresses easy if they already exist in another format, such as Sbase, on your hard disk. Examples are included in the manual to expedite the importing process.

More Buttons, More Options

The third button is the To-Do List, which differs from the Appointment option in that it displays a new cycling window. Within this window you can select a month, day, time, and year for daily tasks. A Note window beside it allows you to enter a note. As with the other options, the Add, Delete, Update and Search buttons stay active for manipulating the entries. Notes are saved and displayed in alphabetical order.

The final button on the bottom of the interface is the Notepad option, which brings up a new window with a list of notes. This option uses AmigaDOS file requesters to access files—a nice touch. The Notepad acts as a mini text editor, allowing you to search and replace, and to cut, copy, and paste with aplomb. You save notes simply by closing the note's window.

Shortcomings

The Notepad worked fine on my OS2.1-equipped A2000/030, loading and saving all manner of notes created with various word processors and saved as ascii text files (including AmigaGuide text files). Such was not the case with my A4000/040 running under OS3.1. When used as a text editor, the Notepad stated the message "Incompatible Save File" at every attempt. I could, however, create new notes using the Add button option, which read in and saved all filetypes on both machines.

While you can select from five different languages, when switching back to English, the option changes from "Change Taal" and won't change back. Finally, the worst bug is in the Merge File option under Appointments. Again, with the A4000 operating under OS3.1, if you try to merge an existing file whose filetype is incompatible, the program freezes.

Minor problems aside, On the Ball 1.30 is a solid performer, with faults that seem to appear only under OS3.1. With years of development, it has stood the test of time quite well. I'd recommend it to anyone looking for an all-purpose Amiga scheduler program.

—Tim Walsh ■

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Tim deals with questions concerning the A500, the Internet, upgrading to a 68010, and an A2090 problem.

HELP KEY

BY TIM WALSH

AGA FOR THE A500

Q: *I've equipped my Amiga 500 with a SupraRam 500RX, and I'd like an answer to a technical question. Is it possible to do AGA graphics on the A500? Also, SysInfo tests indicate that the SupraRam 500RX offers a Zorro II slot. Since some graphics cards fit into a Zorro II slot, wouldn't an adapter let the A500 use a graphics board to view AGA graphics?*

I've seen some recent developments for the A500 (MTEC 68020/68881 board) that "convert" the A500 into an A1200 (CPU). Is there a lateral option of upgrading to the equivalent of an A1200?

Owen Marlowe
sirus@big12.metrobbs.com

A. As far as displaying AGA graphics on the A500, I've never actually seen any products that would allow for it. First, you'd need some way to reproduce memory-intensive HAM8 mode, offer all of AGA's RGB output modes, and support AmigaDOS 3.x. Even if all this were possible, in all likelihood the A500 would be so slow as to be useless. The architecture of the A500's 16-bit data bus and the Amiga's original chip-set design does not lend itself to high-speed movement of data.

While the SupraRAM 500RX may appear revolutionary in its ability to add a Zorro II slot to the A500, it's really nothing new. A number of products from ICD and CeV Design were designed to do the same thing (see "Help Key," May '93).

AMIGA ON THE INTERNET

Q. *Can you tell me where I can pick up Amiga software on the Internet? Do you know if OpalVision has an address? They are the hardest people to get in touch with, but you probably already know that. Also, how can I unzip some of those zipped files on the Internet?*

Carlos Gutierrez
cgutierr@badlands.NoDak.edu

A. The best source of information is in the Usenet Amiga newsgroups. From within the Internet, search for newsgroups using the keyword "Amiga" (without the quotes, of course), and numerous newsgroups will appear. An easier way is to get a Portal account. It's the only commercial network that offers all the messages from the Amiga-related newsgroups in several, easy-to-access menus. I have several ways of accessing newsgroups, but I routinely use Portal to read the Usenet messages because it's the fastest and most convenient way I've found yet.

The OpalVision video processor is manufactured and distributed by Centaur Development (PO Box 3959, Torrance, CA 90510, 310/787-4530). No e-mail address is listed for the company.

Finally, there are several utilities available for zipping and unzipping files. You need to get a copy of PKAZip, which is the Amiga version of PKZip. You'll find it in numerous online locations. For an unzipping-only utility, get a copy of UnZip 5.1D, a freely distributable collection of unzipping utilities for the Amiga.

THE 68010 QUESTION

Q. *I've heard it's possible to replace a 68000 microprocessor with a 68010. However, does a small amount of incompatibility arise with such an upgrade? How can I avoid or fix these incompatibilities? I own an A2000 with AmigaDOS 2.1, and it is equipped with an old GVP Series II hardcard.*

Xavier Messersmith
xcaliber@calon.com

A. Since the price of the 68010 is low and it's a plug-in replacement for the socketed 68000, this is one of the most cost-effective upgrades for the unaccelerated A500/A2000. Years ago, when the 68010 was first introduced, software incompatibility was a problem because programs (especially games) were sensitive to an accelerated system.

Such problems were cleared up years ago, but the myth still endures that the 68010 causes incompatibility problems. In a worst-case scenario, problems may surface, but generally only with older games.

SCSI DEVICE TRANSPLANT

Q. *I have an A2000 equipped with three hard drives. The first is an A2090 hard-disk controller and 20MB Quantum that serve as the boot partition. The second is a GVP Impact II that controls a 120MB SCSI. The third is a 105MB IDE, controlled by a Golden Gate 386 board.*

I'm having difficulties with DKB's Power XL drive. Rarely can the Golden Gate emulator recognize it as the A: floppy drive. These problems seem to occur whenever I place a high-density disk in the drive—it simply returns the error message "Unable to read sector." Any recommendations on a replacement drive I could get?

A.B. Miller
Cape May, New Jersey

A. I don't think you need to spring for a replacement to the Power XL, but you could do two things right away: First, get a replacement for the A2090, and, second, upgrade the operating system to AmigaDOS 2.x or later, which simply involves replacing the Kickstart chip and installing new system software.

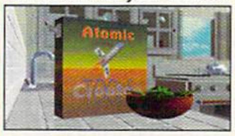
The A2090 hard-disk controller, notorious for causing problems, could be interfering with proper operation of the other drives. A good replacement would be an A2091 or one of the many new hard-disk controllers.

If the PC side of the system continues to have difficulty reading high-density disks from the Power XL, there are other options. With AmigaDOS 2.1 in place, you could run a utility such as CrossDOS, read in high-density floppy disks using the Power XL on the Amiga side, and copy their contents to one of the hard drives. ■

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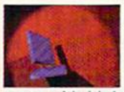
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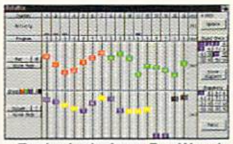
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THE LAST WORD

Kudos, complaints, comments, concerns, and contributions from our readers.

And Still They Come . . .

I just finished reading Sheldon Leemon's articles in November's *AmigaWorld*, and I want to express my gratitude for two pieces that were both informative and interesting to an Amiga novice such as myself. I do, however, have some animation experience with both Macintosh and Silicon Graphics (Alias) programs, and I found the terminology similar, and often the same.

So what prompted this Amiga virgin to pick up a copy of *AmigaWorld*? Next fall I'll be attending a school where the only computer-animation offerings utilize the Video Toaster, and I want to get as familiar as possible with the system beforehand. Unfortunately, I cannot find a bookstore that carries texts on Amigas or the Video Toaster. I would appreciate any suggestions as to sources of information. With the Amiga's current situation, I'm concerned that there will be even fewer resources available by the time I start school next fall.

Tom Keegan
Jersey City, New Jersey

Check out pp. 19–20 in the article "Help Lines!" in this issue. —Eds.

I want to thank Sheldon Leemon for his article, "Toasterman's Tips for Mastering the Video Toaster," in the November *AmigaWorld*. It helped me more than anything else I've read on the subject so far. Right now, I'm finding that the learning curve is fairly steep—I've just recently purchased the Amiga 4000 and the Video Toaster.

Desmond Crooks
Springfield, Oregon

Where Credit Is Due?

In the December 2nd issue of *Entertainment Weekly*, there is an article that describes how all the dazzling special effects produced for the show *Babylon 5* are "generated in several ordinary Macintosh computers." Is this true? I thought Amigas were the computers generating all those special effects. Is Mac getting all the Amiga's credit?

Eric T. Anklin
Tecumseh, Michigan

Seems like they have it wrong. We're contacting ***EW*** *to get an explanation and also notifying the show's creators. —Eds*

Overlooked Again!

I am the proud, proud owner of an Amiga 2500 and will remain forever loyal to the Amiga dynasty. My father and brother each own a 486dx-2 computer, and they subscribe to their own computer magazines, which I glance at to see what's new. In one issue of *PC Magazine* (Dec. 20, '94) I read an article that contained a picturegraph of the 20-year history of the personal computer. I agreed with what they had to say in the article, but they forgot something: They forgot to include the Amiga in their timeline!

Now there's nothing wrong with showing how far we've come, but hey!—the Amiga is a PC (i.e., personal computer). *PC Magazine* seems to have forgotten this. If there are other Amiga users out there who are as insulted as I am, write to *PC Magazine* and tell them to recognize the Amiga. You might also write to your local TV stations and tell them to support the little machine that is producing most of their high-end graphics at little cost.

Tim Samuels
Cambria Heights, New York

> ***There are thousands of us guys who really want to continue the Amiga tradition and are willing to buy another machine.***

Don't Neglect Us v1.3 Guys

I have to agree with Gary Poole's letter in your December issue: The new builders of the Amiga machine would be wise to heed the voices of past devoted users. The main issue is building a machine that will still respect the v1.3 Workbench environment. There are thousands of us guys who really want to continue the Amiga tradition and are willing to buy another machine. But we also want to be able to take along our existing software (which is another reason why we love our Amigas).

So, new Amiga-builder dudes, don't forget us, because when it comes time to help get the new machine off the ground—if the environment is right—you can definitely count on us.

Richard Rayner
Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada

Visions of an Amiga World

I just wanted to thank you for your Amiga-Update line. Hopefully, this mess will be cleared up soon, and the Amiga will be back with a vengeance. If only the new owners will advertise and let people know about the world's best-kept computer secret. They also should let people know about all the "Amiga Firsts" as listed in your January issue (p. 14,) and all of the TV shows and movies that are done with the Amiga.

Just think what a wonderful world it would be if the Amiga ruled! A friend of mine who had never seen an Amiga came over and saw my A3000, and he can't wait to get rid of his IBM compatible and buy an Amiga 4000.

T.L. Trice
Gulf Shores, Alabama ■

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UPCOMING FEATURES

April

Hints and tips for desktop publishers. Also: Hands-on tutorials on using the latest version of PageStream.

May

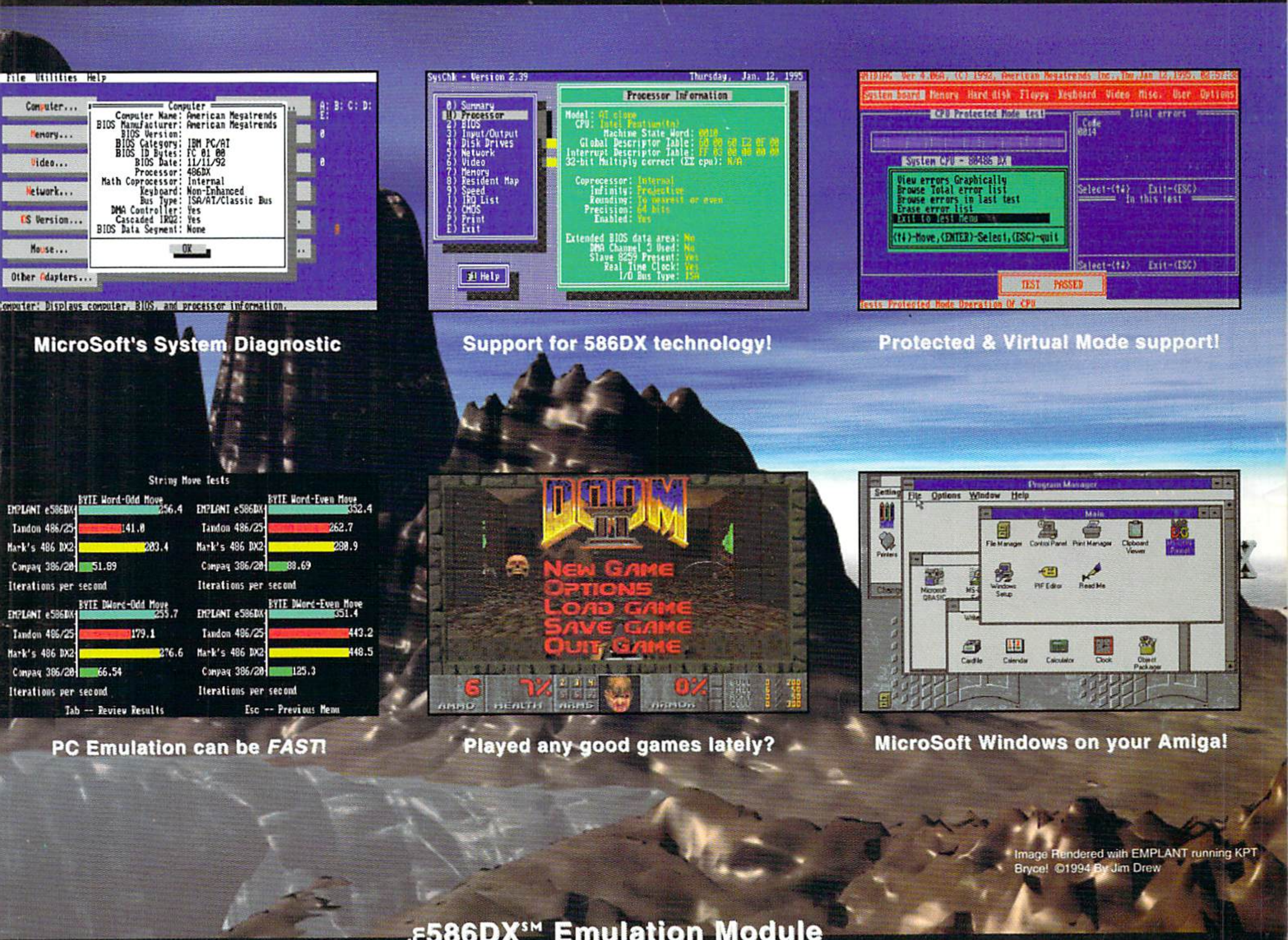
Amigas in multimedia presentations, exhibitions, kiosk systems and other environments all over the country. Also: Profiles and interviews.

June

New super-high speed modems and terminal software for the Amiga. Also: Amiga user's guide to the Internet and other online services.

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